

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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A CHARMING FELLOW.

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CHAPTER VI.

IT is exceedingly disagreeable to find that a scheme you have set your heart on, or a prospect which smiles before you, is displeasing to the persons who surround you. It gives a cold shock to the glow of anticipation.

Algernon did not perhaps care to sympathise very keenly with other folks' pleasure, but he certainly desired that they should be pleased with what pleased him, which is not quite the same thing.

His mother informed him—perhaps with a dash of the Ancram colouring; although we have seen how unjustly the worthy lady was suspected of falsehood by Dr. Bodkin on a late occasion—that Mr. Diamond disapproved of his refusing Mr. Filthorpe's offer, and of his resolve to go to London. Dr. Bodkin, Algernon knew, did not approve it; neither did Minnie, although she had never said so in words. How unpleasantly chilly people were, to be sure!

Mrs. Errington did not like Mr. Diamond. She mistrusted him. His silence and gravity, his odd sarcastic smiles, and taciturn politeness, made her uneasy. Despite the patronising way in which she had spoken of him to Minnie Bodkin, in her heart she thought the young man to be horribly presuming.

"I'm sure he doesn't appreciate you at all, Algy," she declared, winding up a list of Mr. Diamond's defects and misdeemeanours with this culminating accusation.

Algy had a shrewd notion that Mr.

Diamond's appreciation of himself was likely to be a just one, and he was a little vexed and discomfited, that his tutor had given him no word of praise behind his back. Mrs. Errington saw that she had made an impression, and began to heighten and embellish her statements accordingly. "But, my dear boy," said she, "how can we expect him to recognise talents like yours—gentlemanly talents, so to speak? The man himself is a mere plodder. Why, he was a sizar at college!"

Algy felt himself to be a very generous fellow for continuing to "stand up for old Diamond," as he phrased it.

"Well, ma'am, plenty of great men have been poor scholars. Dean Swift was a sizar."

"And Dean Swift died in a madhouse! So you see, Algy!"

Mrs. Errington plumed herself a good deal upon this retort, and returned to the attack upon Mr. Diamond with fresh vigour; being one of those persons whose mode of warfare is elephantine, and who, never content with merely killing their enemy, must ponderously stamp and mash every semblance of humanity out of him.

Algernon did not like all this. His vanity was—at least during this period of his life—a great deal more vulnerable than his mother's. And she, although she doated on him, would say unpleasant things, indignantly repeat mortifying remarks which had been made, and in a hundred ways unconsciously wound the sensitive love of approbation which was one of Algernon's tenderest (not to say weakest) points.

It was all very disagreeable. But it was not the worst he had to look forward to. There was one person who would be so cast down, so despairing, at the news

of his going away, that—that—it would be quite painful for a fellow to witness such grief. And yet it could not be expected—it could never have been expected—that he should stay in Whitford all his life! He must point that out to Rhoda.

Poor Rhoda!

For ten years, that is to say for more than half her life, Algernon Errington had been an idol, a hero, to her. From the first day when, peeping from behind the parlour door, she had beheld the strangers enter—Mrs. Errington, majestic, in a huge hat and plume, such as young readers may have seen in obsolete fashion books (the mode was so absurd fifty years ago, and had none of that simple elegance which distinguishes your costume, my dear young lady), and Algy, a lovely fair child, in a black velvet suit and falling collar—from that moment the boy had been a radiant apparition in her imagination. How small, and poor, and shabby she felt, as she peeped out of the parlour at that beautiful, blooming mother and son! Not poor and shabby in a milliner's sense of the word, but literally of no account, or beauty, or value, in the world, little shy motherless thing! She had an intense delight in beauty, this Whitford grocer's daughter. And all her little life the craving for beauty in her had been starved: not wilfully, but because the very conception of such food as would wholesomely have fed it, was wanting in the people with whom she lived.

That was a great day when she first, by chance, attracted Mrs. Errington's notice. She was too timid and too simple to scheme for that end, as many children would have done, although she tremblingly desired it. What a surprisingly splendid sight was the tortoise-shell work-box, full of amber satin and silver! What a delightful revelation the sound of the old harpsichord, touched by Mrs. Errington's plump white fingers! What a perennial source of wonder and admiration were that lady's accomplishments, and condescension, and kind soft voice!

As to Algernon, there never was such a clever and brilliant little boy. At eight years old he could sing little songs to his mother's accompaniment, in the sweetest piping voice. He could recite little verses. He even drew quite so that you could tell—or Rhoda could—his trees, houses, and men from one another.

In all the stories his mother told about the greatness of her family, and in all the

descriptions she gave of her ancestral home in Warwickshire, Rhoda's imagination put in the boy as the central figure of the piece. She could see him in the great hall hung round with armour; although she knew that he had never been in the family mansion in his life; in the grand drawing-room, with its purple carpet, and gilt furniture; above all, in the long portrait gallery, of which Rhoda was never tired of hearing. Heaven knows how she, innocently, and Mrs. Errington, exercising her hereditary talent, embellished and transformed the old brick house in its deer park, or what enchanted landscapes the child at all events conjured up, among the gentle slopes and tufted woods of Warwickshire!

Even the period of hobbledoydom, fatal to beauty, to grace, almost to civilised humanity in most school-boys, Algernon passed through triumphantly. He had a great sense of humour, and fastidious pampered habits of mind and body, which enabled him to look down with more or less disdain—a good-humoured disdain, always, Algy was never bitter—upon the obstreperous youth at the Whitford Grammar School.

One fight he had. He was forced into it by circumstances, against his will. Not that he was a coward, but he had a greater, and more candidly expressed regard for the ease and comfort of his body, than his schoolfellows conceived to be compatible with pluck. However, our young friend, if less stoical, was a great deal cleverer than the majority of his peers; and perceiving that the moment had arrived when he must either fight or lose caste altogether, he frankly accepted the former alternative. He fought a boy bigger and heavier than himself, got beaten (not severely, but fairly well beaten) and bore his defeat—in the dialect of his compeers, "took his licking"—admirably. He was quite as popular afterwards, as if he had thrashed his adversary, who was a loutish boy, the cock of the school, as to strength. Had he bruised his way to the perilous glory of being cock of the school himself, it would have behoved him to maintain it against all comers; which is an anxious and harassing position. Algy had not vanquished the victor, but he had "taken his licking like a trump," and, on the whole, may be said to have achieved his reputation, at the smallest cost possible under the circumstances.

His mother and Rhoda almost shrieked

at beholding his bruised cheek, and bleeding lip, when he came home one half-holiday, from the field of battle. Algy laughed as well as his swollen features would let him, and calmed their feminine apprehensions. Nor would he accept his fond parent's enthusiastic praise of his heroism, mingled with denunciations of "that murderous young ruffian, Master Mannit."

"Pooh, ma'am," said the hero, "it's all brutal and low enough. We bumped and thumped each other as awkwardly as possible. I fought because I was obliged. And I didn't like it, and I shan't fight again if I can help it. It is so stupid!"

The young fellow's great charm was to be unaffected. Even his fine-gentlemanism sat quite easily on him, and was displayed with the frankest good humour. Some one reproached him once with being more nice than wise. "We can't all be wise, but we needn't be nasty!" returned Algy, with quaint gravity. His temper was, as Minnie Bodkin had said, nearly perfect. He had a singular knack of disarming anger or hostility. You could not laugh Algernon out of any course he had set his heart upon—a rare kind of strength at his age—but it was ten to one he would laugh you into agreeing with him. Every one of his little gifts and accomplishments was worth twice as much in him, as it would have been in clumsier hands.

If you had a headache, I do not think that you would have found Algy's companionship altogether soothing. Sorrow is apt to feel the very sunshine cruelly bright and cheerful. But if you were merry and wanted society: or bored, and wanted amusement: or dull and wanted exhilarating, no better companion could be desired.

He was genial with his equals, affable to his inferiors, modest towards his superiors—and had not a grain of veneration in his whole composition.

At seventeen years old Algernon left the Grammar School. But he continued to "read" with Mr. Diamond for nearly a twelvemonth. "My son is studying the classics with Mr. Diamond," Mrs. Errington would say; "I can't send my boy to the University, where all his forefathers distinguished themselves. But he has had the education of a gentleman."

It was a very desultory kind of reading at the best, and it was interrupted by the long Midsummer holidays, during which Mr. Diamond went away from Whitford,

no one knew exactly whither. And during these same holidays, Mrs. Errington, who said she required change of air, had taken lodgings in a little quiet Welsh village, and obtained Mr. Maxfield's permission to have Rhoda with her.

That was a time of joy for the girl. It did not at all detract from Rhoda's happiness, that she was required to wait hand and foot on Mrs. Errington; to bring her her breakfast in bed; to trim her caps, to mend her stockings; to iron out scraps of fine lace and muslin; to walk with her when she was minded to stroll into the village; to order the dinner; to make the pudding—a culinary operation too delicate for the fingers of the rustic with whom they lodged—to listen to her patroness when it pleased her to talk; and to play interminable games of cribbage with her when she was tired of talking. All these things were a labour of love to Rhoda. And Mrs. Errington was kind to the girl in her own way.

And above all, was not Algy there? Those were happy days in the Welsh village. On the long delicious summer afternoons, when Mrs. Errington was asleep after dinner, Rhoda would sit out of doors with her sewing; on a bench under the parlour window, so as to be within call of her patroness; and Algy would lounge beside her with a book; or make short excursions to get her wild flowers, which he would toss into her lap, laughing at her ecstasy of gratitude. "Oh, Algy!" she would cry, "Oh, how good of you! How lovely they are!" The words written down are not eloquent, but Rhoda's looks and tones made them so.

"They are not half so lovely," Algy would answer, "as properly educated garden flowers; nor so sweet either. But I know you like that sort of herbage."

Rhoda never forgot those days. How should she forget them?—since it was at this period that Algernon first discovered that he was in love with her. Perhaps he might never have made the discovery if they had all stayed at Whitford. There he saw her, as he had seen her since her childhood, surrounded by coarse common people, and living their life, more or less. It is not every one who can be expected to recognise your diamond, if you set it in lead. Rhoda was always sweet, always gentle, always pretty, but she formed part and parcel of old Max's establishment. When the boy and girl were quite small, she used to help him with his lessons (her one

year's seniority made a greater difference between them then, than it did later) and had always been used to do him sisterly service in a hundred ways. And all this was by no means favourable to the young gentleman's falling in love with her.

But at Llanryddan, Rhoda appeared under quite a different aspect. She looked prettier than ever before, Algernon thought. And perhaps she really was so; for there is no such cosmetic for the complexion as happiness. Apart from her vulgar relations, and treated as a lady by the few strangers with whom they came in contact, it was surprising to find how good her manners were, and how much natural grace she possessed. Mrs. Errington had taught her what may be termed the technicalities of polite behaviour. From her own heart and native sensibility she had learned the essentials. The people in the village turned their heads to admire her, as she walked modestly along. Who could help admiring her? Algernon decided that there was not one among the young ladies of Whitford who could compare with Rhoda. "She is ten times as pretty as those raw-boned McDongalls, and twenty times as well bred as Alethea Dockett, and ever so much cleverer than Miss Pawkins," he reflected. Minnie Bodkin never came into his head in the list of damsels with whom Rhoda could be compared. Minnie occupied a place apart, quite removed from any idea of love-making.

Dear Little Rhoda! How fond she was of him!

Altogether Rhoda appeared in a new light, and the new light became her mightily. Yes; Algy was certainly in love with her, he acknowledged to himself. There was no scene, no declaration. It all came to pass very gradually. In Rhoda the sense of this love stole on as subtly as the dawn. Before she had begun to watch the glowing streaks of rose-colour, it was daylight! And then how warm and golden it grew in her little world! How the birds chirped and fluttered, and the flowers breathed sweet breath, and a thousand diamond drops stood on the humblest blades of grass!

If she had been nine years old, instead of nearly nineteen, she could scarcely have given less heed to the worldly aspects of the situation.

Algernon perhaps more consciously set aside considerations of the future. He

was but a boy, however; and he always had a great gift of enjoying the present moment, and sending Janus-headed Care, that looks forward and backward, to the deuce. As yet there was no Lord Seely on his horizon; no London society; no diplomatic career. The latter indeed was but an Ancramism of his mother's, when she spoke of it to Mr. Diamond, and Algy at that time had never entertained the idea of it.

So these two young persons sat side by side, on the bench outside the Welsh cottage, and were as happy as the midsummer days were long.

But long as the midsummer days were, they passed. Then came the time for going back to Whitford. The day before their return home Rhoda received a shock of pain—the first, but not the last, which she ever felt from this love of hers—at these words, said carelessly, but in a low voice, by Algy, as he lounged at her side, watching the sunset:

"Rhoda, darling, you must not say a word to any one about—about you and me, you know."

Not say a word! What had she to say? And to whom? "No, Algy," she answered, in a faint little voice, and began to meditate. The idea had been presented to her for the first time that it was her duty, or Algy's duty, to drag their secret from its home in Fairyland, and subject it to the eyes and tongues of mortals. But being once there, the idea stayed in her mind and would not be banished. Her father—Mrs. Errington—what would they say, if they knew that—that she had dared to love Algernon? The future began to look terribly hard to her. The glittering mist which had hidden it was drawn away like a gauze curtain. How could she not have seen it all before? Would any one believe for evermore that she had been such a child, such a fool, so selfishly absorbed in her pleasant day-dreams, as not to calculate the cost of it for one moment until now?

"Oh, Algy!" the poor child broke out, lifting a pale face and startled eyes to his; "if we could only go on for ever as we are! If it would be always summer, and we two could stay in this village, and never go back, or see any of the people again—except father," she added hastily. And a pang of remorse smote her as her conscience told her that the father who loved her so well, and was so good to her, whatever he might be to others, was not

at all necessary to the happiness of her existence henceforward.

"Don't let's be miserable now, at all events," returned Algernon cheerfully. "Look at that purple bar of cloud on the gold! I wonder if I could paint that. I wish I had my colour-box here. The pencil sketches are so dreary after all that colour."

Rhoda had no doubt that Algernon could paint "that," or anything else he applied his brush to. After a while she said, with her heart beating violently, and the colour coming and going in her cheeks, "Don't you think it would be wrong, deceitful—to—if we—not to tell—" Poor Rhoda could not frame her sentence, and was obliged to leave it unfinished.

"Deceitful! Am I generally deceitful, Rhoda? Oh, I say, don't cry; there's a pet! Don't, my darling! I can't bear to see you sorry. But, look here, Rhoda, dear; I'm so young yet, that it wouldn't do to talk about being in love, or anything of that sort. Though I know I shall never change, they would declare I didn't know my own mind, and would make a joke of it"—this shot told with Rhoda, who shrank from ridicule, as a sensitive plant shrinks from the north wind—"and bother my—our lives out. Can't you see old Grimgriffin's great front teeth grinning at us?"

It was in these terms that Algy was wont to allude to that respectable spinster, Miss Elizabeth Grimshaw.

Rhoda knew that Algy wished and expected her to smile, when he said that. And she tried to please him; but the smile would not come. Her lip quivered, and tears began to gather in her eyes again. She would have sobbed outright if she had tried to speak. The more she thought, the sadder and more frightened she grew. Ridicule was painful, but that was not the worst. Her father! Mrs. Errington! She lay awake half the night, terrifying herself with imaginations of their wrath.

Algy found an opportunity the next morning to whisper to her a few words. "Don't look so melancholy, Rhoda. They'll wonder at Whitford what's the matter if you go back with such a wan face. And as to what you said about deceit, why we shan't pretend not to love each other! Look here, we must have patience! I shall always love you, darling, and I'm sure to get my own way with my mother in the long run: I always do."

So then there would be obstacles to

contend with on Mrs. Errington's part, and Algy acknowledged that there would. Of course she had known before that it must be so. But Algy had declared that he would always love her; that was the one comforting thought to which she clung. Rhoda had grown from a child to a woman since yesterday. Algy was only older by four-and-twenty hours.

After their return to Whitford came Mr. Filthorpe's letter. Then his mother's application to Lady Seely, brought about by an old acquaintance of Mrs. Errington, who lived in London, and kept up an intermittent correspondence with her. Both these events were talked over in Rhoda's presence. Indeed, the girl filled the part towards Mrs. Errington, that the confidant enacts towards the prima donna in an Italian opera. Mrs. Errington was always singing scenes to her, which, so far as Rhoda's share in them went, might just as well have been uttered in the shape of a soliloquy. But the lady was used to her confidant, and liked to have her near, to take her hand in the impressive passages, and to walk up the stage with her during the symphony.

So Rhoda heard Algernon's prospects canvassed. In her heart she longed that he should accept Mr. Filthorpe's offer. It would keep him nearer to her in every sense. She had few opportunities of talking with him alone now—far fewer than at dear Llanryddan; but she was able to say a few words to him privately one afternoon (the very afternoon of Dr. Bodkin's whist-party), and she timidly hinted that if Algy went to Bristol, instead of to London amongst all those great folks, she would not feel that she had lost him so completely.

"My dear child!" exclaimed Algy, whose outlook on life had a good deal changed during the last three months. "How can you talk so? Fancy me on Filthorpe's office stool!"

"London is such a long way off, Algy," murmured the girl plaintively. "And then, amongst all those grand people, lords and ladies, you—you may grow different."

"Upon my word, my dear Rhoda, your appreciation of me is highly flattering! For my part it seems to me more likely that I should grow 'different' in the society of Bristol tradesman than amongst my own kith and kin—people like myself and my parents in education and manners. I am a gentleman, Rhoda. Lord Seely is not more."

Rhoda shrank back abashed before this magnificent young gentleman. Such a flourish was very unusual in Algernon. But the Ancram strain in him had been asserting itself lately. He was sorry when he saw the poor girl's hurt look and downcast eyes, from which the big tears were silently falling one by one. He took her in his arms, and kissed her pale cheeks, and brought a blush on to them, and an April smile to her lips; and called her his own dear pretty Rhoda, whom he could never, never forget.

"Perhaps it would be best to forget me, Algy," she faltered. And although his loving words, and flatteries, and caresses, were inexpressibly sweet to her, the pain remained at her heart.

She never again ventured to say a word to him about his plans. She would listen, meekly and admiringly, to his vivid pictures of all the fine things he was to do in the future: pictures in which her figure appeared—like the donor of a great altarpiece, full of splendid saints and golden-crowned angels—kneeling in one corner. And she would sit in silent anguish whilst Mrs. Errington expatiated on her son's prospects; wherein, of late, a "great alliance" played a large part. But she could not rouse herself to elation or enthusiasm. This mattered little to Mrs. Errington, who only required her confidant to stand tolerably still with her back to the audience. But it worried Algernon to see Rhoda's sad, downcast face, irresponsible to any of his bright anticipations. It must be owned that the young fellow's position was not entirely pleasant. Yet his admirable temper and spirits scarcely flagged. He was never cross, except, now and then, just a very little to his mother. And if no one else in the world less deserved his ill-humour, at least no one else in the world was so absolutely certain to forgive him for it!

CRITICISM EXTRAORDINARY.

SYDNEY SMITH proposed, as an entertaining change in human affairs, that everything should be decided by minorities, as they were almost always in the right. If it were possible to act upon the wit's suggestion, and apply it retrospectively to literature, there would be some rare gaps in the ranks of standard authors. Very few of the time-honoured lords of literature would escape degradation, if critics who

abhor anything that is popular; carping scribblers, "like gnats in a summer's evening, which are never very troublesome but in the finest and most glorious season;" poets who cannot accept any verses save their own as poetry; and disappointed writers, soul sick with envy of successful competitors, were allowed to over-ride the verdict of the many, and discrown all who failed to satisfy their crotchety notions. Let us recal some of the pretty things minorities have, from time to time, had to say about the favourites of the majorities, and what would be the fate of many of our brightest literary stars if Sydney Smith's idea could be worked out.

Among our classical friends we should have to condemn Homer, for stealing all that is good in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* from some unknown predecessors; *Æschylus* for his inability to make his verse run smoothly; *Aristotle* for his profound ignorance; *Xenophon* for turning history into romance; and *Thucydides* for not knowing how to properly marshal his facts. *Livy* and *Herodotus* must go for their want of truthfulness; *Virgil* for his want of invention, *Plautus* for his coarseness; *Cicero* for his cold artificiality and tediousness; and *Pliny* for presuming to pass himself off for something better than a paltry fabulist.

There would be a terrible thinning of England's sons of song. That *Paradise Lost* which has nothing meritorious about it save its length, although some people are pleased to call it a poem, would in itself suffice to drag *Milton* from his high estate, even if he were not responsible for an inelegantly splendid masque, a parcel of sonnets, of which only two are not absolutely bad, sundry lesser pieces whose peculiarity is not excellence, and the vulgar *Lycidas*, in which there is no nature for there is no truth, no art for there is nothing new, but something akin to impiety, clothed in harsh diction, unpleasing numbers, and uncertain rhymes. *John Dryden* must pay the penalty as the author of *The Hind and the Panther*, the worst poem of the age; and *Pope*, all tune and no meaning, has no claim for merciful consideration on account of his unintelligible essays, his barbarous rhapsody upon *Windsor Forest*, or the pert, insipid heap of commonplaces he dignified with the title *An Essay on Criticism*. The fact that he obtained admittance into literary society because

his person was as ridiculous as his writings, should not save the flimsy poems, wanting alike in genius, dignity, fancy and fire, of Oliver Goldsmith; or excuse the preserving of that incoherent piece of stuff, without plot or incident, known as *She Stoops to Conquer*—as much out of place in a literary collection as the works of Cowper, a good man but no poet; or of Crabbe, who wrote the very converse of poetry. The vicious style and vulgar sentimentality of Thomson calls for his exclusion from good company, along with the poet who passed that judgment upon *The Seasons*, and who, in his own long, weak, lame lucubrations, wavering so prettily between pathos and silliness,

Both by precept and example shows,
That prose is verse, and verse is merely prose;

besides having achieved the writing of the very worst poem ever printed in a quarto volume, *The White Doe of Rylstone*, the sad outcome of poetical intoxication, produced by extreme self-admiration. Despite his nobility, to which Byron, great in so little a way, owed his awaking one morning and finding himself famous, he must be put out in the cold; with the gratuitously nonsensical Keats, given to setting forth the most incongruous ideas in the most uncouth language; with Shelley, who, setting grammar and common-sense equally at defiance, warred against reason, taste, and virtue in drivelling prose run mad—all brilliance, confusion, and vacuity; and with Scott, one of the poets who are no poets, who obtained a spurious fame by writing imitations of black-letter ballads, and literary pantomimes in the worst dialects of the English language, making one believe helmets were always paste-board and horses always hobby.

Unkindest cut of all, under the minority dispensation, we should be compelled to part company with Shakespeare. There can be no doubt about that; for, we are assured, he was sadly deficient in judgment, lacked inventive power, and was utterly out of his element in tragedy; that he could only rave without reason, rule, or coherency; and, when at his best, but produce mere farces, without salt or savour, wherein there is not so much meaning as in the neighing of a horse or the growling of a dog. He cannot be spared on the plea, raised by modern admirers, that somebody else constructed his plays for him, and furnished the

matter, the thread, the collective knowledge, and much of the large, cool, reasonable philosophy with which they abound; whilst sweet Will only found the melody, the phrase-making, the vibratory words, and all the passionate things that hang about and are suggested by them. It may be true, as the gentleman says, that he does not greatly derogate from Shakespeare, by despoiling him of the beggarly elements of his plots and his material philosophies; but we do not know that it is true, because we do not, in the least, understand what he means; that, spite of this despoiling, "we must still class him among the men who crown an epoch, and burn for ever with an eternal glory, because that in their day their ear was true to find, and their hearts were true to utter; while no other could, or, being able, dared sum up in song its canticle of canticles!"

Supposing the old monarchs of rhyme to be deposed, who are to be their successors? Well, it is easier to upset than to set up. We have no means of ascertaining the views of the minority, and, unfortunately, the bards sublime, whose songs are caviare to the multitude, have not the faculty of making their names echo through the corridors of time, and consequently become lost to memory altogether. Still we may make a few suggestions. Milton's place might be occupied by Blackmore, admired by Locke for his penetrating judgment and flights of fancy, unless it belongs of right to the inimitable Phillips, "the Milton of his age," of whose *Splendid Shilling*, *Cider*, and *Blenheim*, it was prophesied that they would last as long as valour, generosity, and the language they were written in. Dryden might make way for the handsome sloven, *Captain Rag*, otherwise Edmund Neale, but better known as Edmund Smith, who "touched upon" nearly every sort of poetry, and of whom it has been written: "His contrivances were adroit and majestic; his images lively and adequate; his sentiments charming; his expressions natural and bold; his numbers various and sounding; and that enamelled mixture of classical wit, which, without redundancy and affectation, sparkled through his writings, and were no less pertinent and agreeable." For Pope we should have the Earl of Dorset, declared by Dryden to be as great in satire as Shakespeare was in tragedy; and for Cowper, Christopher Pitt, clerk, "very eminent for his talents in poetry." Byron

himself points out his successor, Mr. Wright, sometime consul-general for the Seven Islands, who was inspired by no common muse, "to hail the land of gods and god-like men;" and surely he who sang "The Aboriginal Britons," and, with his genuine poetic fires made modern Britons praise their sires, might fairly oust Walter Scott. Colchester's Quaker poet might be eligible for Wordsworth's place, but for his modesty; the chief of the Lakers could never have written himself down thus:—

Davenant was born upon the third of March,
Waller was born upon the third of March,
Otway was born upon the third of March,
And I was born upon the third of March;
But this affords no proof I am a poet—
Thousands of blockheads, in the lapse of time,
Were also born upon the third of March.
Milton was born in sixteen hundred and eight,
And I was born in eighteen hundred and eight;
But what a mighty interval divides us,
Besides the simple interval of time!

And as for Shakespeare, we are sure of having the minority with us, in dethroning him in favour of the Poet of Humanity, Walt Whitman, who claims to have a forte for loafing, and singing "Man's physiology from top to toe."

It is comforting to be assured by the unimpeachable Clarissa Richardson, that Tristram Shandy may be read with safety, since that execrable work is too gross to be inflaming; but it is not so pleasant to learn that Thackeray "settled, like a meat-fly, on whatever one had got for dinner, and made one sick of it;" that Miss Edgeworth made morality an impertinence; that it has only been with fear and trembling that any good novelist has ventured to show the slightest bias in favour of the Ten Commandments; while Charlotte Brontë inculcates a heathenish doctrine of religion, and, moreover, betrays great coarseness of taste and a total ignorance of the manners of society. Mr. Disraeli's novels owe their success, we have been told, to possessing the most frivolous qualities of that sort of writing, and a kind of diablerie making up for the want of talent; and the works of the author of David Copperfield are so extremely difficult to read in their present shape, another prophet of the minority has informed us, that they require translating into classical English, as the language of the lower orders ought never to appear in print.

When Thomson's one-eyed friend acknowledged the receipt of a copy of Winter, with a condemnatory couplet,

the irate giver retaliated in a savage quatrain. The poet did not like being criticised in rhyme; and, we dare say, the author of The Angel in the House would have preferred having his poem "slated" in plain prose, rather than parodied, as a cruel critic chose to do, after this fashion: The gentle reader, we apprise, That this new Angel in the House Contains a tale not very wise, About a parson and a sponse. The author, gentle as a lamb, Has managed his rhymes to fit; He haply fancies he has writ Another "In Memoriam." How his intended gathered flowers, And took her tea, and after sung, Is told in style somewhat like ours, For delectation of the young. But, reader, lest you say we quiz The poet's record of his she, Some little pictures you shall see, Not in our language, but in his:—

While thus I grieved and kissed her glove,
My man brought in her note to say
Papa had bid her send his love,
And hop'd I'd dine with them next day;
They had learned and practised Parcell's glee,
To sing it by to-morrow night:
The postscript was—her sisters and she,
Inclosed some violets blue and white.

Restless and sick of long exile,
From those sweet friends I rode, to see
The church repairs, and, after awhile,
Waylaying the Dean, was asked to tea.
They introduced the Cousin Fred
I'd heard of, Honor's favourite; grave,
Dark, handsome, bluff, but gently bred,
And with an air of the salt wave.

Fear not this saline Cousin Fred, He gives no tragic mischief birth; There are no tears for you to shed, Unless they may be tears of mirth. From ball to bed, from field to farm, The tale flows nicely purling on; With much conceit there is no harm, In the love-legend here begun. The rest will come some other day, If public sympathy allows; And this is all we have to say About the Angel in the House.

Literary journals would certainly be more entertaining if rhymed reviews were the rule; but critics would require a nicer ear than the reviewer who, wishing to give an example of the Laureat's "measured or lyric blank verse," quoted Tristram's song—

Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bend the brier!
A star in Heaven, a star within the mere!
Ay, ay, O ay—a star was my desire,
And one was far apart, and one was near;
Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bow the grass,
And one was water, and one star was fire,
And one will ever shine, and one will pass!
Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that move the mere.

Yet more necessary to the critic than a good ear for rhyme, is a good memory.

"Burns," wrote one, not long ago, "in language which offends the artificially delicate modern ear, avows that he does not mind nakedness if he has an abundant supply of good ale." The assertion might be safely challenged, and Bishop Stillingfleet cited to refute it. A defender of Bunyan's originality, indignant at the revival of the exploded libel that the Pilgrim's Progress was adapted from the mediæval French, complained, "Since Pope set the example of robbing authors of their just dues, by declaring Garth did not write his own Dispensary, there has been a growing tendency to deny everybody the credit of everything." It is hard that Bunyan cannot be justified without traducing Pope, who actually cries out against the injustice he is charged with perpetrating, drawing the portrait of an abandoned critic, he says :

All books he reads, and all he reads avails,
From Dryden's Fables down to D'Urfey's Tales;
With him most authors steal their works, or buy,
Garth did not write his own Dispensary.

Commenting upon an advocate for the incorporation of Holmfirth winding up his argument with some verses with the refrain, "Clear the way!" a newspaper writer said, "I do not quite know why an ardent desire to get a small town incorporated should not be allowed to incite a man to express his thoughts in poetry. I hope the town will be incorporated, and that this writer may be the first mayor. He may then rival his French prototype, who, to welcome his king, inscribed on a triumphal arch, 'Vive le Roi, Ma Femme et moi!'" The hit was sadly misdirected under the idea that the Holmfirthian was his own poet, whereas he had pressed Dr. Mackay into his service for the occasion.

In the Taming of the Shrew, Biondello announces "Petruchio is coming, in a new hat and an old jerkin; a pair of old breeches thrice turned; a pair of boots that have been candle-cases, one buckled, another laced; an old rusty sword ta'en out of the town armoury, with a broken hilt and chapeless; with two broken points." Upon this Johnson observes "How a sword should have two broken points I cannot tell!" The doctor was aware of but one meaning attached to the word "points," but he never dreamed of hiding his ignorance by tampering with his author's text, after the manner of some modern editors. A more ludicrous misreading still was that of the correspondent

of Notes and Queries, who, quoting from James the First's sonnet on the Armada—

They forward came in monstrous array,
Both sea and land beset us everywhere;
Braggas threatened us a ruinous decay—

asked "Who is Braggas who threatened England with ruinous decay?" Some critics, however, have done worse than blunder over a word. Chatterton's Rowley and Ireland's Vortigern had plenty of believers and defenders among the critical bigwigs of their day. Sundry learned men, taking More's Utopia seriously, proposed to send missionaries to Christianize the interesting inhabitants of the newly-discovered island. Meinhold's Amber Witch was pronounced upon internal evidence to be a genuine history, until the writer claimed it as his own invention. Gilbert Wakefield, after profound cogitation and an exemplary analysis, discovers Pope's Song by a Person of Quality to be a collection of unconnected lines, disgraceful to the poet; and, in our own time, the author of Firmilian had the gratification of seeing his poem welcomed as the worthy effort of a new disciple of the spasmodic school he intended to ridicule. Too matter of fact in another sense was Dr. Moseley, who declared Colman's Inkle and Yarico would never do, because the finale ran—

Come let us dance and sing,
While all Barbadoes' bells shall ring!

whereas there was only one bell to be found in the whole island! In the same spirit a reviewer took a novelist to task for giving a little town two churches, when it was well known it could only boast of one. There was more sense in the Scotch weaver's complaint that he had not time to read Chalmers's Sermons: "You see, sir, I had to sit with the book in the tae hand and the dictionar' in the ither; and the warst o' it was, I couldna find his long-nebbed words in the dictionar'." Dr. Guthrie probably was not so much astonished by his weaver friend, as Wallace the actor by the Frenchman to whom he had read the first scene of Macbeth: "You said, Monsieur Vallake, dat Shakespere is de poet of nature and common-sense! Here is his play open—Macbess—yes. Well, here is tree old—old—vat you call veetch, vid de broom and no close on at all—upon de blasted heath—good! Von veetch say to de oder veetch, 'Ven shall ve tree meet agen?' De oder veetch she say, 'In tondare,' de oder she say, 'In

lightning,' and she say to dem herself agen: 'In rain!' Now dis is not nature, dis is not common-sense. Oh, no! De tree old veech shall nevere go out to meet upon the blasted heath with no close on, in tondare, lightning, and in rain. Ah, no! It is not common-sense, dey stay at home, aha!"

If we desired to make a collection of comical criticisms, we should go to the American newspapers for choice specimens. A St. Francisco journalist, announcing the arrival of a certain painter in that city, says, "He possesses merit, as an artist, but it is hard to tell whether it lies in landscape or marine painting. You never can tell his cows from his ships, except when they have their tails exalted; then the absence of spars betrays their character. Even then you may mistake them for schooners scudding under bare poles." Of Bierstadt, we are told that his study of nature lies all outside, and has nothing whatever to do with the spirituality of all the matchless archimago of form and colour, which she displays upon the mighty theatres of her creative power. A once-great singer is compared to an aged nightingale with a cold, who has retained the perfection of his method, while his voice, like the memory of a buried joy, may be uninjured, but hardly admits of description. A popular prima donna is thus gently handled by an unimpassionate gentleman—"She is little, she is fat, and she is not young, but she puts on those nippy, rosebud airs, and jumps and teeters about, and is so blessed playful—the young, sweet thing—that the near-sighted critics take off their spectacles, lest in her gambols she break them." But, for a good setting down, commend us to the following notice of a performance of Hamlet, at Lafayette, Indiana:—"Hamlet must have been a remarkable man not to have gone mad in the midst of such good characters as his aimless mother, the insipid discordant Ophelia, and the noisily-empty Laertes, as they were presented on this stage. We confess to a secret satisfaction at the poisoning of the queen, who, on rouging her cheeks, got a double dose at the end of her nose; and we experienced a malicious joy in the unskilful stabbing of Laertes, who deserved death for his unaccented lamentations over a horse-fiddle sister, whose departure should have been to him a source of joy. The grave-digger did well, not only in his professional work,

but in effectually burying the ill-dressed Ophelia. We never attended a funeral with more pleasure."

It is, however, in panegyric that the American critic especially shines. Of Salvini's Othello one said, "It was the awakening fury of the Hyrcanian tiger disturbed at his feast of blood, or the distended tempest of a tropic land, laying all waste before it." Of a pianoforte player we read, "Rubinstein is on the isthmus that divides the Orient and the Occident. Their spray dashes over into each other, but they do not sing. There is an evident conflict and struggle in his nature and his music. He roars like a lion and is soft as a sucking dove, by turns. He springs like a panther, and, with his grace and pressure, upon the keys; but his hands are claws in velvet—they smite like a hammer, they caress like a mother!" This must surely have come from the hand that likened a lady-singer's "Amen" to the crowning faggot of a pyramid of fire. Mdle. Il Murska ought to have been in the seventh heaven of delight when her vocalization was compared to an elaborate work of the jeweller, sparkling with priceless gems, adorned with every elegant and rare device, with fret-work, and crystal flowers, and twining tendrils of fine-spun gold, and glistening dew-drops of diamonds, and every conceivable beauty that the more practised artists could lay upon it. Mdle. Nillson could not complain of non-appreciation, likened, as she was, to the Venus de' Medici, coming like a gust of bright sunshine, her notes falling on the tendrils of her listener's hearts like the bubbling music of distant waterfalls on a bed of roses; while her singing of "Home, sweet Home," made the critic feel as if he were building a castle of alabaster and gold, surrounding it with rainbows, shutting it in with gates of pearl and moonshine, and embowering it with roses. This is pretty well, but surpassed, we think, by the following tribute to Madame Rudersdorff, culled from a New York journal:—"To tell you how she sang would be impossible; but if one may compare an object of sight to an object of sound, we should say—her voice is like a rocket, which, from the first, bursts upon the sight with a magnificence that claims undivided attention, and in an instant carries your attention from earth to heaven; where it bursts into ten thousand orbs of glory that scintillate each a separate gem upon the blue empyrean; and burn, each

with a varied hue of beauty that at once distracts and commands attention; until they burst with a fleecy trail of stars that floats down the vaulted sky softly and slowly, until the earth seems over-arched by a lacework of fire, that drops earthward as it falls, growing thinner, finer; till, like the last expiring breath of a sigh, it is lost in the evening air." If that is not fine writing we should like to know where it is to be found. At any rate, it makes clear to us the hitherto dark saying of Mr. Boucicault—"Music hath made idiots of us all. It is the æsthetic stimulant of the day, and we are all in a condition of harmonic delirium tremens."

GRANDFATHER'S STORY.

GIVE me the helm, child. Why, the steel is dimmed, And on the breast-plate, gauntlet, cuisse, and all; Our gallants now are grown so dainty-limbed, They let the armour rust upon the wall. See, how the dust upon the feather lies; Out on the carpet knights! Nay, never pout, Go, bid them do their devoir for thine eyes, The old mail sickens for one rousing bout. There, put thy little finger in the cleft, Through which the life-blood poured like summer rain,

When 'mid the best of Astley's riders left, I lay and groined on Edgehill's fatal plain; Aye, if old Gilbert there, at break of morn, Had not come back to seek me 'mid the dead, No sancey wench had in these halls been born, To try my casque upon her golden head. Those covenanting knaves struck hard and deep. See, here a sword right through the plating shore: That dint a lance-head made on Naseby steep. When our wild charge their bravest backward bore. But this jagged hole! fiercest and fellest stroke, Of all I gave, or took, in days of old, I had it when our line at Marston broke; Sit here, child, thou shalt hear the story told. When the gay sun on black Long Marston rose, Thy mother was a bride of seventeen. Thou'rt like her, girl; like hers thy soft cheek glows, But thy blue eyes are scarce so blue, I ween! And as we mustered in the castle court, She came to me as she was wont to come, And whispered, masking fear in wistful sport, "My father, bring my Harry safely home."

Poor Harry, frank and joyous out he rode, Waving the flag she wrought him in the van. And as ranks closed, and war's fierce fever glowed, He bore him like a gallant gentleman; And Ouse ran redly through each willowed bank, Ere the dark day was done, and all was lost, And with the sun the hopes of Stuart sank, And, snow-like, melted all the northern host. Fast to the sheltering walls of loyal York, Fleed proud Newcastle, all his projects o'er; And keen Prince Rupert, whose hot morning's work, Had wrecked the royal barque in sight of shore. What did it boot to linger there to die, 'Neath rebel lance, or rebel axe and cord? Better to wait beneath a happier sky, Till God saw His anointed line restored. Yet ere I turned old Warrior for the fight, (It irks me yet, girl, though 'tis past so long) I heard our Harry's shout ring through the fight, I saw his crest struck backward 'mid the throng,

I saw the bright head down amid the spears, I saw the Roundhead's arm was up to strike, And dashing in, amid our comrade's cheers, I flung myself between him and the pike. Our brave lads rallied round us. Masterless, Full many a steed of Fairfax ran, I trow, We tore our bloody way amid the press, And I had Harry on my saddle bow. And not till many a league of heather lay Behind our thundering hoofs, I reeled and fell, But as I sank, I heard old Gilbert say, "See, see, the boy breathes yet," and all was well. Poor Harry! Aye, he died at red Dunbar, And, like a blighted flower, she followed fast; And thou, safe in thy convent walls afar, Wert left to cheer thy grandsire's heart at last. But thy sweet mother, ever on that day, At gloaming, creeping to my side would come, And bid me tell her of the desperate fray, When her old father brought her Harry home.

ODD MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT.

IN TWO PARTS. PART II.

LET us now hail a jovial ghost—one who has known men and prisons, but a gay shade withal. A squinting Alcibiades bedecked with scarlet and gold, in ruffles and cravat of choice Mechlin. His figure in china once adorned countless mantel-pieces; his health was drunk by the enthusiastic electors of Middlesex out of punch-bowls, within whose depths lurked the magic words "Wilkes and Liberty." This quaint old shadow is that of a great expellee, a gloriously odd member of Parliament, Jack Wilkes—whilome editor of the North Briton, Monk of Medmenham, Lord Mayor of London, the liver of a life of jokes and gaols, of reckless extravagance and utter insolvency, bravest of wits, and most kaleidoscopic of men. Gay days spent at Leyden, in the springtime of youth, did not produce any more distaste to matrimony in Wilkes himself, than did his outrageous squint on the part of the fair. At Great George Street, Westminster, now abandoned to men of curves and gradients, he once held high wassail, and succeeded at last in frightening his wife away from his table; but there was yet method in the madness of the wild son of a distiller. Collecting around him a hopeful band of boon companions (mostly hailing from Aylesbury or the neighbourhood)—such as Thomas Potter, son of the Archbishop of Canterbury; Sir Francis Dashwood, afterwards Lord le Despenser; the Earl of Sandwich, Sir Francis Blake Delaval, Sir William Stanhope, Sir Thomas Stapleton, Paul Whitehead, hoc genus omne—he led a free and easy life, apparently without any particular object. But when a general election occurred in 1754, his roysterers were bound to sup-

port his attempt to get into Parliament for Berwick. Here the Delaval interest was supposed to be strong enough to return him. All his relations dissuaded him from the attempt; but, having a wholesome contempt for family counsels, he stood for Berwick, and was utterly defeated, at the cost of three or four thousand pounds. This behaviour encouraged his wife to separate herself from him. His dissipated life she could and did condone, but the waste of the family property was not to be passively borne.

After signing the deed of separation, Wilkes, being now a free man, spent his life in the fashion supposed to become a gentleman of wit and pleasure upon Town. He frequented the Dilettanti Club, the Beefsteak Club, and, above all, Medmenham Abbey. Sneering at the Aylesbury set, with whom he consorted, he yet determined to make use of them upon occasion. This soon arrived. Potter, the member for Aylesbury, was appointed in June, 1757, one of the vice-treasurers of Ireland; and, having vacated his seat, made a private agreement with Wilkes, that if he could obtain a seat for any other place, he should endeavour to secure Wilkes' election for Aylesbury. In pursuance of this unholy compact, Potter was chosen for Oakhampton, and Wilkes came in for Aylesbury, at a cost of seven thousand pounds—a large proportion of which, doubtless, found its way into Potter's pocket. Again making use of his friends, Wilkes brought himself into friendly relation with Earl Temple, by raising a regiment of militia, at the head of which was Sir Francis Dashwood. Shortly after getting into the house, he started the famous "North Briton," in opposition to the "Briton," conducted by Smollett on behalf of Lord Bute. In this sensational journal, Wilkes made furious onslaught on Lord Bute and Scotchmen generally; quoted Dr. Johnson one day, and sneered at him the next; laughed at Hogarth himself for representing the ugly side of nature; and brought forward Churchill, whom he justly described as a manly genius. At this period he was very popular, and was successful in retaining his hold upon society for several years. The fascination of his manner was so extraordinarily great, that he secured at last the admiration of those whom he had most bitterly assailed. "Mr. Wilkes," said Lord Mansfield, "was the pleasantest companion, the politest gentleman, and

the greatest scholar I ever knew." "His name," said Dr. Johnson—whom he had reviled for accepting a pension, after having defined it as "pay given to a state hireling, for treason to his country"—"has been sounded from pole to pole as the phoenix of convivial felicity;" and added, very characteristically, "Jack has a great variety of talk, Jack is a scholar, and Jack has the manners of a gentleman." The moral doctor, it is true, had one feeling in common with the gay reprobate—witness his letter to Mrs. Thrale. "I have been breaking jokes with Jack Wilkes upon the Scotch. Such, madam, are the vicissitudes of things." A greater man than Johnson, the "ingenious" Edward Gibbon himself, was shocked at the blasphemy and indecency of Wilkes's conversation, but was subdued to this conclusion: "I scarcely ever met with a better companion; he has inexhaustible spirits, infinite wit and humour, and a great deal of knowledge."

Agreeable as a friend, Wilkes was a terrible enemy. In 1763, he put the climax to his attacks on Lord Bute by publishing an edition of Ben Jonson's *Fall of Mortimer*, for the sole purpose of prefixing to it a sarcastic dedication to his lordship, wherein it was intimated that George the Third was held in no less subjection by Bute and the Princess Dowager of Wales, than Edward the Second had been by Queen Isabella and her minion Roger Mortimer. Lord Bute shortly afterwards resigned; and Wilkes next distinguished himself by publishing a garbled version of the king's speech before it was delivered, and by making a virulent attack upon it. This freak was proclaimed by the law officers of the Crown "an infamous and seditious libel;" a warrant was issued to apprehend and bring before the Secretary of State the authors, printers, and publishers of Number 45 of the *North Briton*, and to seize their papers. After forty-eight persons had been arrested on a general warrant, Wilkes refused to obey it, and told the messenger he would kill him if he endeavoured to enforce it. Nevertheless, he was compelled to surrender to numbers, was committed to the Tower, and deprived of his militia rank. Wilkes was discharged from the Tower on a question of privilege of Parliament, and immediately attacked the Secretaries of State. Actions for damages for illegal arrest were brought and tried before Lord Camden and a jury. Wilkes recovered damages. His action

was followed by the other persons arrested, and many costly suits were thrown upon the crown.

Nevertheless, Parliament ordered Number 45 to be burnt, as a libel; and, in the meanwhile, Wilkes got through several duels with success, but found his debts too much for him. Returning to England after a sojourn in Paris—after protracted litigation, public riots, and illuminations—he was sentenced to fine and imprisonment, and was, moreover, expelled from the House of Commons, on the motion of Lord Barrington, by two hundred and nineteen votes against one hundred and thirty-six. Wilkes, however, was unconquered. He lived sumptuously, in the King's Bench, on the wine, poultry, game, fruit, and hard cash, sent him from every part of England—nay, even from Charleston, South Carolina. On the expulsion of Wilkes, a new writ was issued for the election of a member for the county of Middlesex. On the 14th February, a meeting of freeholders was held on the subject, and the result of their deliberations was that he was re-elected on the 16th. But the House of Commons declared the election void, and added that "Mr. Wilkes was, and is, incapable of being elected into the present Parliament." After considerable controversy, it was decided that an expelled member is incapable of being elected again to the same Parliament which expelled him. But the freeholders of Middlesex thought that Parliament had exceeded its powers, and persisted in re-electing Wilkes, once more, on the 16th of March. On the following day this election was also declared null and void. Another writ was issued, and Colonel Henry Lawes Luttrell was brought forward to oppose Wilkes, who, on the 13th April, was returned by the sheriffs as having eleven hundred and forty-three votes, to Colonel Luttrell's two hundred and ninety-six, but the House of Commons, following the Comyns-Tufnell precedent, in the Maldon case, ordered the return to be amended, by inserting Colonel Luttrell's name in the place of that of Wilkes. On the expiration of his term of imprisonment, Wilkes was more popular than ever. He was magnificently entertained at the Mansion House; presented with a silver cup, elected sheriff, alderman, and, at last, Lord Mayor, and triumphantly re-entered Parliament as member for Middlesex. In 1787, although beginning to feel the infirmities of age, the great

Tribune displayed all his ancient fire in the defence of the great Pro-consul. Warren Hastings's accusers had been thundering out diatribes, in which Hastings was compared to Verres; but Wilkes significantly remarked that "the House ought to recollect that, when the governor of Sicily was accused before the Roman Senate, scarcely an inhabitant of the island could be found who did not exhibit complaints against him. In the instance before us, though the prosecution, or, rather, the persecution of Mr. Hastings has been already nearly three years in progress, yet not a single charge or imputation upon his conduct has been transmitted from India." "When we consider," resumed he, "that, while the empire was mouldering away elsewhere"—America had been lost—"Mr. Hastings, by his exertions, preserved, unimpaired, our possessions in the East, I am covered with astonishment that a faction in this assembly should have been able to carry on the proceeding to the present point." This manly declaration brought down upon Wilkes a curious M.P., the eccentric Courtenay, who, after a few sneers at Lord Hood, went on to say: "The worthy alderman (Wilkes) possesses more sense than to feel anger when I mean him a compliment, as I do when I assert that his country owes him great obligations for having, at one period of his life, diffused a spirit of liberty throughout the general mass of the people unexampled, except, indeed, in the times of Jack Cade and Wat Tyler. The honourable magistrate has defended Mr. Hastings's treatment of the Begums, by asserting that those princesses were engaged in rebellion. Surely he must have looked at the question obliquely, or he never could have formed so erroneous an idea. Two old women in rebellion against the governor! Impossible. Nor would the worthy alderman have made an Essay on Woman in the same manner that Mr. Hastings did." This odd flight of eloquence teaches us, of modern times, to wonder but little at the violence of Wilkes. It is of no use replying with a tap of a lady's fan when people attack you with a flail.

Next turns up an unsavoury ghost, topped by an ancient scratch wig picked up in a gutter—that oddest of all odd members of Parliament, John Elwes, miser and gambler. His father, Mr. Meggot, a member of the beerocracy located in Southwark, left him a large fortune; but the

influence of his mother, who, though a very rich widow, is said to have starved herself to death, instilled into his mind those saving principles by which he was afterwards distinguished. It appears clear that the miserly spirit came from his mother's family, for it was carried to great lengths by his uncle, Sir Harvey Elwes, of Stoke in Suffolk, on visiting whom the young man invariably dressed for the part of the saving nephew. This generalship completely won the heart of the uncle, who loved to sit with his nephew before a miserable fire, with one glass of wine between them, while they inveighed against the extravagance of the times. As soon as night came on they went to bed, because they thus saved the expense of candlelight. One of Sir Harvey Elwes's biographers says that he never fell in love, for he made it the cardinal rule of his life never to give anything—not even his affections. Young Meggot, who was at this time a daring rider, a considerable gourmand, and a tremendous gambler, was known to all the fashionable circles of the metropolis, and frequented those clubs where play was deepest and longest; but his skilful management of his uncle was at length rewarded by a legacy of two hundred and fifty thousand pounds and the name of Elwes. His avarice was full of quaint peculiarities. He would sit up all night at play, risking thousands with the most fashionable and profligate men of the time, and, about four in the morning, would walk in the cold or rain to Smithfield to meet his own cattle, and would squabble energetically with a carcass butcher for a shilling. In 1774, Mr. Elwes was nominated for Berkshire by Lord Craven; but only consented to stand for that county, on the condition that he was to be brought in for nothing. All he actually did was to dine at the ordinary at Abingdon, so that he obtained a seat in Parliament for eighteen pence. Chosen for Berkshire in three successive Parliaments, he sat altogether about twelve years as a thoroughly independent member. Dying in 1783, at the age of seventy-seven, this queer member left a fortune of half-a-million sterling, besides entailed estates.

Also possessing a taste for gambling, but otherwise utterly unlike Elwes, was the celebrated "M. P. Gully."

The ingenious Thomas Raikes, writing under the date of December 15th, 1832, liberates his soul in this fashion: "One

of the effects of the Reform Bill is, that the bone-grubber, W. Cobbett, is returned for Oldham, while, on the other hand, the notorious Mr. H. Hunt has been turned out of his seat at Preston. The new borough of Brighton, under the very nose of the Court, has returned two most decided Radicals, Wigney and Faithfull, who talk openly of reducing the allowance made to the king and queen. The famous pugilist and bettor at Newmarket, Gully, has been returned for Pontefract. In short, the new Parliament will produce a curious medley."

John Gully, like Neate, and other famous boxers, was a Bristol boy, and one of the finest specimens of humanity to be found in England. At that time prize-fighting was as much a national institution as horse-racing itself, while cricket and rowing were almost unborn. Gully was a singularly fortunate man in either ring. Defeated, after a tremendous encounter with the celebrated Game Chicken, he subsequently became champion of England, after beating Gregson in two great battles. Understanding both figures and horses, he soon left the P. R. for the betting ring, and, as a "better, round" with those tremendous gamblers, Old Q., Lord Foley, Lord Abingdon, Colonel Mellish, Charles Fox, and William Pitt, no doubt made a handsome percentage out of his book. Having gradually acquired sufficient capital, he owned a small string of horses of his own, and, having given Lord Jersey four thousand pounds for Mameluke, winner of the Derby of 1827, at the subsequent Ascot meeting, in three bets alone lost twenty-one thousand pounds on him in the St. Leger. This famous, but unlucky, horse, brought back his owner some of his money the following year; but this severe experience was only the prelude to the victories of Margrave in the Leger, Mendicant in the Oaks, the Hermit in the "Guineas," and of Pyrrhus the First and Andover in the Derby.

In the agitation which preceded the passing of the first Reform Bill. Mr. Gully, who then resided at Ackworth, near Pontefract, took an active part, and, being accused of having spoken too strongly on the dictation practised by Lord Mexborough on the electors of Pontefract—wherein he was wide of the mark—he consented to stand in opposition to him for the borough, and was triumphantly returned for the first Reformed Parliament, and also sat in the second one.

But the late hours of St. Stephen's were ill suited to a man accustomed to the fresh air of the heath, and the sunlit bustle of the ring side. The health of the famous athlete, who had "polished off" the gigantic Gregson on the memorable occasion when the championship was fought for in silk stockings, was found unequal to the wear and tear of Parliament; and, although his constituents gave him a *carte blanche* about his attendance, he felt constrained to forsake an assembly wherein he had acquired the respect and good-will of all with whom he came in contact.

The "bone-grubber" alluded to by Mr. Raikes, was the country lad who, after running away from home, becoming a lawyer's clerk, serving in the ranks, rising to be sergeant-major, and visiting Canada and the United States, settled in Pennsylvania as a publisher, and soon became a political writer of some power under the name of "Peter Porcupine." Having made America too hot for him, Cobbett set sail for England, shaking the dust from his feet on what he then stigmatised as "that infamous land, where judges become felons, and felons judges;" and, returning to England, became editor of the "Porcupine." Cobbett had a mania for pitching into men and institutions; and possessing real common-sense, and a happy knack of giving his opponents ridiculous nicknames, became a power in the land. Again visiting America, he, in a fit of enthusiasm, brought Tom Paine's bones back with him—an action by which he suffered much in public opinion. Burning to get into Parliament, he made unsuccessful attempts at Coventry and Preston; and, at last, having regained his popularity, during his trial for publishing a seditious article in the Register, was returned to Parliament for Oldham. The ploughboy, the private of the Fifty-fourth, after a variety of vicissitudes had become a member of the British Legislature. "Nor for this," wrote Lord Dalling and Bulwer, "had he bowed his knee to any minister, nor served any party, nor administered with ambitious interest to any popular feeling. His pen had been made to serve as a double-edged sword, which smote alike Whig and Tory, Pitt and Fox, Castlereagh and Tierney, Canning and Brougham, Wellington and Grey, even Hunt and Waithman. He had sneered at education, at philosophy, and at negro emancipation. He had assailed alike

Catholicism and Protestantism; he had respected few feelings that Englishmen respect. He had been a butcher; he had been a bankrupt, of a trade which excluded him from the jury box, and in a list which proclaimed him publicly to be insolvent." Yet, alone and unaided, he had at last cut his way into the great council of the country, at an age exceeding that allotted to man—a respectable-looking, red-faced gentleman, in a dust-coloured coat, and drab breeches with gaiters. Tall, and strongly built, with a round and ruddy countenance, and a peculiarly cynical mouth, he entered the House of Commons an old man of seventy, and immediately took his place as one of the best debaters in it—a feat unparalleled in the annals of the House.

Many more odd members have taken part in the assembly at St. Stephens. There are ribald persons, who would not hesitate to pronounce the behaviour of the present premier as savouring somewhat of oddity in his "young and curly" days of velvet "continuations," when he uttered the famous prophecy—"The day will come when you shall hear me!" Out of the minds of middle-aged men has not yet died the memory of Colonel Sibthorp, who never tired of denouncing the Great Exhibition of 1851 and of expressing his utter "want of confidence in the ministry." An honourable member has been heard to declare his willingness to "die on the floor of the House;" and the Sergeant-at-arms has, on more than one occasion, been called upon to exercise his functions; but in bidding farewell to odd members I cannot do better than make my final bow to the drab spectre of that thorough representative of insular oddity—sturdy old Cobbett—quaint, passionate, sensible, and obstinate—an odd Member of Parliament, but a man and an Englishman every inch of him.

A SILENT WITNESS.

BY EDMUND YATES.

AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP," "CASTAWAY," "THE YELLOW FLAG," &c. &c.

BOOK III. CHAPTER II. LOOKING BACK.

If Mr. Heath had had his way, it is probable that he would have answered the question put to him by the shabby man, as to whom "he should like to murder next?" in a very practical manner, by then and there disposing of his inter-

rogator. If, while denying himself this pleasure, he had desired to indulge in the rare chance of speaking the truth, the words which would have started unbidden to his lips would have been, "That she-devil, your daughter!"

For the shabby man in the foreign-cut coat covered with worn and shining braid, and the slouch hat—the man with the tottering gait, and the thick hot breath, who stood swaying about uneasily in his bulbous boots—was all that remained of Ned Studley: the man who "looked like a duke, don't you know," and than whom, at one time, neither Long's nor Limmer's ever turned out a more perfect type of the ex-military swell. There was a leer in his bloodshot eyes, and a half-fatuous, half-insolent smile on his blotched and bloated face, that drove Heath nearly wild with rage; and it was all that he could do to bring the power of self-interest to his control, and to prevent himself from seizing the mouthing idiot by the throat, and shaking him soundly. An instant's reflection, however, made him appreciate the enormous price which he would have to pay for the luxury. The old man then standing before him, weak and wretched, with a craving for drink, which, without his aid, he was unable to supply—a pauper, homeless and friendless—was easily managed and disposed of; but if he once were made aware of the fact of his daughter's existence, of her bold self-reliance, and of the way in which she had exerted her power, he would doubtless still have sufficient natural cunning left to see how his hold over Heath had been strengthened, and to avail himself of the knowledge. Plainly, therefore, it was Mr. Heath's business to temporise with his disreputable father-in-law, and render him as amiable as possible.

"Is it you?" he said, with that affectation of frankness and bonhomie which had often stood him in good stead; "I declare I did not know you at first, your foreign appearance quite deceived me."

But the captain was very far from being moved by these blandishments. "My appearance is something more than foreign," he said, with a downward glance at his shabby clothes; "and, in the same way that there are none so deaf as those that won't hear, there are, I reckon, none so difficult to convince of our existence as those who wish us dead. That is about your sentiment towards me, Mr. Heath; and that is why I ask you who you would

like to murder next, with the perfect knowledge of what you would say if you spoke the truth."

Heath's face darkened for a moment, but the cloud was quickly gone. "It is scarcely advisable, is it," he said, "to use such ugly words, even if you have reason to complain of me, and I do not think you have? But we will talk that subject out at length. I was going to write to you in reply to your letter from Ostend, but your presence here simplifies the matter, and we can arrange it much better in conversation. Have you dined?"

"I had some infernal corned beef and bottled stout on board the Ostend boat, at three o'clock, if you call that dining," said the captain, "but I have touched nothing since—at least nothing solid, I mean."

"Then let us get some dinner and have our talk at the same time," said Heath. "No, not in there," he continued, as his companion made a move towards the station restaurant; "we should find that too noisy, too crowded, and too British altogether. I know a place where we can be more at our ease, and where the cuisine and cellar are both irreproachable."

He offered his arm to his companion as he spoke, and, pulling his hat far over his eyes, to avoid the chance recognition of any passing acquaintance, led him out of the station and across to Leicester-square, plunging into a labyrinth of streets, where the houses, from their external appearance, would seem to have been transplanted from some foreign city. Entering one of them, in which, from the obsequious bows bestowed upon him by the portly, bald-headed landlord, and the brisk French waiter, he seemed to be well known and highly respected, Mr. Heath made his way to a small private room on the first floor, not much larger than a warm bath, but prettily furnished and tastefully decorated, and there issued his orders for the repast; which, he said, might be commenced at once, while the soup and fish were in preparation, with a few hors d'œuvres in the shape of prawns and radishes, and a bottle of Sauterne.

A deep draught of the rich, mellow wine, for the glass from which he drank was bell-shaped and thin, sent the colour mantling again through Captain Studley's bloated face, and brought the light into his bleared and rheumy eyes. "That's good tippie, glorious tippie," he said, smacking his lips as he replaced his empty

glass upon the table. "If I could drink that always, I should be a man again. I am not the man I was, sir, when we used to do business together. Age has clutched me in his claw, as I recollect hearing one of them say at one of the penny readings; and I am left alone in the world, at a time when I ought to have my friends and family about me."

As he concluded these maundering remarks he shook his head solemnly, and pushed his glass across the table.

"You must not give way in this fashion, Studley," said Heath, filling the glass and returning it to his companion with a pleasant smile. "You know the saying, 'There is life in the old dog yet?'"

"Yes," said the captain, after sipping his wine, "that's all deuced fine about the old dog, but the quantity of life in him entirely depends upon the state in which he is kept. Let him have the run of the kitchen, stretched before the fire and fed with the scraps which fall from the master's table—the master's table," said the captain, repeating the words as with a dull reminiscence of something that he had heard before, "and he will go on all right; but if he is left out to sleep in an old barrel, and only gets dirty bones and such like—well, he will have a very bad time of it. And that's my case, Heath; I am rather in the old-barrel-and-dirty-bone line, I am thinking, and I don't see why I should stand it, sir; and, what's more, I don't intend to."

"Here is the soup," said Heath; "we will go into that question by-and-by, when we have got rid of the waiter. Don't put any pepper into it, my good fellow," he continued, lifting up his hand in horror; "the cook would faint if he saw you experimenting with his *bonne femme* after that fashion."

"My palate wants a little exciting, it isn't so keen as it was, and that's the fact," said the captain. "I have often heard about the doctors who tell the poor people to supply themselves with good port wine; but I never appreciated the point of the joke until lately. I ought to live well, I know, and I can't—that's about the truth of it."

"I don't see that you have much to complain of, Studley," said Heath, without any anger in his tone; "the allowance which I have hitherto been able to make you is certainly not large, but it ought to be enough to keep you going; and if you keep up your old skill at play——"

"But I don't, sir," said the captain, interrupting him; "both skill and luck seem to be gone. They have introduced some new games, too, that I do not manage to get hold of as I did of old; and even when there seems to be a decided run of luck, I find myself finking in backing the card or the colour. Besides, I am too old, and too ill, to be carrying on this sort of game any longer. I don't want to be dependent on the clearness of my head or the steadiness of my hand any more. I want enough to keep me in comfort on the Continent—I have lost all taste for London—with my half bottle of wine for my breakfast, my bottle at dinner, and some hot grog at night. What I get now won't do that, and that's why I wrote to you. You got my letter?"

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Heath, through his teeth; "I got your letter."

"I thought I would come over myself for the answer, as you were not too quick about it," said the captain. They were half through the dinner by this time; and the empty bottle of Sauterne had been replaced by one of Beaune, which was nearly in the same state as its predecessor. "What have you to say to my proposition?"

"I do not clearly recollect what it is in detail," said Heath, with a smile; "but I suppose it may be generally taken as asking for more money. I do not wholly object to that, but my notion is you are arguing on false premisses. You seem to take me for a wealthy man?"

"I only echo the general opinion," said Studley; "and there cannot be much doubt about it, I should think. The manager of Middleham's bank, besides getting a pretty heavy screw of his own, must be in the way of getting certain information which cannot fail to turn into money."

"It is precisely by declining to avail myself of any of the information of which you speak, and rigorously confining myself to my duties at the bank, that I have been able to hold my position, and to secure what is, undoubtedly, a very good salary," said Heath.

"Well, but the young lady," muttered the captain, whose voice was gradually becoming indistinct, "the heiress that you are going to marry? Hold on a minute, I have got it here—I am not one to speak without book." He fumbled in his breast-pocket, and after much trouble, from the recesses of a greasy note-case, produced

a newspaper cutting; then with much difficulty in adjusting a pair of glasses on his nose he read—

"Forthcoming marriage.—We are enabled to state that a marriage has been arranged between Miss Middleham, the heiress whose debut this season has created so great a sensation, and Mr. George Heath, a gentleman who for some years has managed the well-known banking establishment from which the young lady's fortune is derived."

"What do you say to that?"

"Say, my good friend?" said Heath. "I say that the story is a lie, from beginning to end; that the statement has not the smallest foundation in fact; that some penny-a-lining donkey has learned through the butler, or the kitchenmaid, or some other source from which these creatures get their information, that I have been in the habit of seeing a good deal of Miss Middleham—which is quite true, having to consult her constantly on matters of business—and has started this idiotic story."

"What! do you mean to say that it is not true that you are going to marry Miss Middleham?" asked the captain, hazily.

"No more than that you are going to marry her, my good fellow," said Heath; "and I suppose that is scarcely likely. Do you know what brought me to the Charing-cross station just now? To see Miss Middleham off to Germany: not to escort her there, or take leave of her as a friend or as a lover, as they wish to make out, though, if I had been her lover, and her affianced lover, I should scarcely have allowed her to go alone. Simply as a matter of business, to see her and her—and her maid, off by the mail train. There is not a word of truth in the report, I tell you."

"There does not seem to be," said the captain, shaking his bemuddled head. Then, after a few moments' consideration, he looked up at his companion with a stolid glare, and said, "Anyhow, that is the future, with which we have nothing to do, sir. My business is with the past, concerning which I shall have certain things to say, which would be found highly interesting in a court of justice."

Heath started, but, on looking up, he discovered that the captain's head had fallen on his breast, and that he was already in a semi-somnolent state.

"Very little wine has an effect upon him now," muttered Heath to himself; "and I

suspect it is only when he is in this crazy, muddled state, that he utters threats or thoughts of vengeance. Nevertheless, it will be advisable to get him abroad and keep him there, where his ravings are not so likely to be understood or taken hold of. What a miserable degraded wretch he has become! If his daughter cared but little for him, any filial feeling she might have would probably vanish entirely if she saw him now. Or perhaps the other way," he continued: "merely to find him in such a state of misery and disgrace might soften her heart towards him—women are so perverse, there is no knowing what they may or may not do." He sat there, occupied with his own thoughts for some little time, with his eyes fixed upon the slumbering figure of his companion, listening to the stertorous breathing, and eyeing with scorn the fits of nodding which passed over him, and the contorted postures into which he fell. When the waiter had brought the bill, and received payment, Heath thought it time to rouse the captain from his slumbers—prodding him with his stick, as he might have done to a dog, and telling him sharply to get up and be off. The captain awoke, very much refreshed by the slight nap which he had taken. He had apparently some little difficulty in making out where he was; but recollection, when it came to him, was very full and vivid. "I have had forty winks," he said, yawning and shaking himself, "but they have done me good. A very pleasant dinner, and a very agreeable conversation; so agreeable that I think we omitted to settle anything about the business which we proposed to discuss—the question of increasing my allowance."

"It shall be increased," said Heath, shortly; "to what extent I cannot say just now. It is a heavy tax upon me; but I wish you to live in comfort and on the Continent, understand—anywhere out of England. Go back to Ostend, and I will communicate with you at your old lodging. Meantime, here is some money to go on with." He took a ten-pound note from his case, and handed it to the old man. As the captain clutched it in his moist palm, and listened to the delicious crisp sound, once so familiar to him, he was nearly relapsing into his maundering state; but he pulled himself together sufficiently to wish his benefactor "Good night," and with a feeble attempt at dignity he tottered off down the street.

Even after the retreating figure had fairly passed out of sight, Heath remained standing on the same spot, debating within himself what to do. He had had a hard day of it, and was both physically and mentally weary, and craved for rest; but he knew himself too well to believe that sleep would come to him at once. What he had gone through was of too exciting a character to be easily laid aside, and he doubted whether it would not be better for him to go to the quiet and decorous club to which he belonged, and sit deeper into the night in conversation with some of the acquaintances he was sure to find there, rather than give himself up to thought in his solitary chambers. Finally, however, he came to the resolution that it had to be faced and fought through, and that he had to take immediate decision in regard to his own future—the aspect of which had been so completely altered by the circumstances which had happened during the day just passed. So he turned his face to the north-west, and strode forth in the direction of his home.

In selecting his home, Mr. Heath had exercised his usual excellent judgment. With his income he might have lived where he liked; in chambers in the Albany, or a bachelor residence in Mayfair. There were plenty of City men, whose position was nothing like equal to his, who drove away in their broughams, at the conclusion of business hours, and, until they returned again to the hive, were as gay and as useless as any of the drones of West-End society; but Mr. Heath had no purpose to gain by any such exhibition of luxury and ease; he knew, on the contrary, that the less display he made the more highly he would be thought of by those whose good-will it was desirable for him to cultivate, and his own inclination led him to select more modest quarters. He had accordingly taken up his residence in a big rambling block of houses, formerly an Inn of Chancery, but long since unconnected with the law, and let out in chambers to anyone who could give the steward satisfactory references as to his respectability and his rent-paying powers. In the house in which Mr. Heath occupied one portion of the first floor, a queer colony was located. There, at the top of the last steep flight of stairs, was the story occupied by Mr. Crosshatch, the engraver, where the patient man and his assistants sat hour after hour working away under the shaded

lights. There the Nova Zembla Consols Tin Mining Company had its office, the destinies of which were presided over by an old man in a mangy sealskin waistcoat, who looked as if he knew nothing of tin in any shape, and a boy, whose sole occupation appeared to be to write his name on the ink-stained desk, and to smear it out again with his elbow. There, Messrs. Minchin and Minus, solicitors of the highest respectability, carried on their business; and thence Mr. Plantagenet Bouverie, army agent and diamond merchant, otherwise Ezra Moss, bankrupt baked-potato salesman, issued his polite circulars to noblemen and gentlemen, offering at once to advance them any sums of money simply on their note of hand.

The rooms on the first floor, into which Mr. Heath let himself by his latch-key, as seen by the light of the lamp burning on the table, were large and commodious, plainly furnished, with a due regard to comfort, but without any attempt at luxury, save, perhaps, in the well-filled book-cases, and in the excellence of the proof prints hanging on the walls. He took some letters from a rack fixed on one side of the mantelpiece, and examined their addresses under the lamp, but they were apparently of no interest, for he put them aside unopened, and throwing himself into an easy chair, was at once immersed in a reverie. Not a reverie of a pleasant kind either, if one could judge from his knitted brow, and the manner in which he gnawed his nether lip. With unequalled nerve aiding him in the carrying out of the most desperate crime, without a trace of conscience, this man was yet superstitious, and a frightful feeling of an impending Nemesis was on him now. The occurrences of the day had been too much for him, he had lost his usual power of command over his thoughts, and could turn them into none other than unpleasant channels—the recollection of the defeat he had sustained, the unsatisfactoriness of things in general, the extraordinary intrusion into his life of the woman who had played so conspicuous a part in a certain portion of it, and whom he believed to be dead—the superstitious feeling was strong on him at that moment, and he could not bear up against it. All that had happened that day seemed to come to him in the light of an omen. Was it so, was his career really winding up? He sprang from the chair under the spur of

that idea, and commenced pacing the room with hasty strides. The fancied security in which he had lived, and which had enabled him to carry his head so high, and set at defiance whatever might come, was vanished, gone into air! What safety from detection had he now, would he ever have again? Who could answer for the circumstances which might induce a woman, whose hatred and vengeance were all the more terrible because of her clearness of brain and strength of mind, to reveal all she knew. All was changed now, all his plans for the future had crumbled away. He smiled bitterly to himself as he thought of the career which Mrs. Crutchley had sketched out for him, as the lazy member of Parliament, with dinners and wife alike irreproachable. No, that pleasant vista was closed for ever; but there was no reason why one almost equally pleasant should not open in its stead. Not in England though, there the game was played out; but he was very well off, he had plenty of money, even though the coup of marrying the heiress on which he had calculated with such certainty had failed—and on the Continent he might enjoy himself in a manner, and with a freedom which he had never yet known; his life had been one of toil and trouble hitherto, and he might now enjoy it. Not quite yet, though. He had engagements on hand—one in particular—a financial scheme which would take some months to secure, but which, if it turned out as he expected, would have the effect of doubling his fortune.

Yes, with such resources as he would then possess he could indulge himself to the top of his bent; there would be no need either of the dissimulation which he had practised throughout his career, of the dread so long laboured under lest the discovery should be made, that the faultless and decorous bank clerk, so pure and so respectable, had his weaknesses and his passions like other men, and indulged in them as freely as the rest, if with more watchfulness and secrecy.

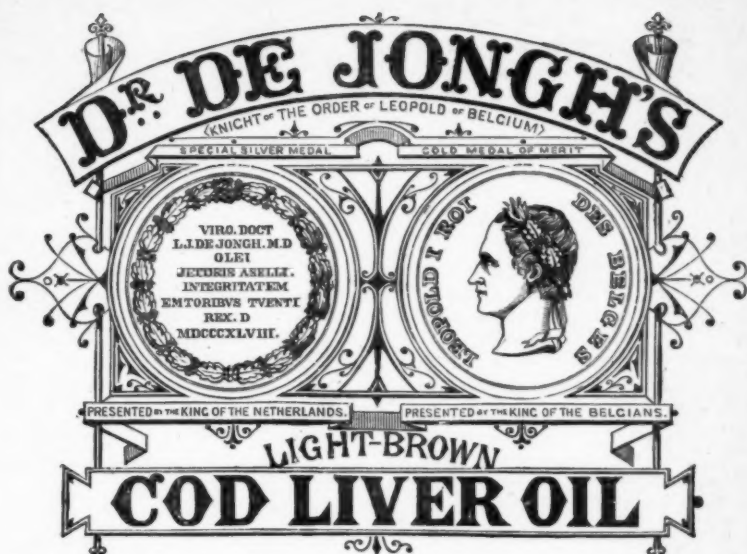
A curse on the thoughts, they would still run in the same groove! The robbery

of the bank, so long cogitated over, so cleverly planned, so nearly executed with success, had it not been for the old man's awaking; the figure of the old man wildly fighting for life, and the awful hush that followed when he succumbed! A horrible mistake that matter altogether! The booty secured had been large indeed, but on the acquisition of it had resulted the unintentional murder, and the commencement of the compact between himself and Studley which had placed him in his present dangerous position. A combination of horrors was upon him, from out of which kept looming up, from time to time, distinctly visible, a woman's face—bright, fascinating, and bewitching—with laughing eyes and a sunny smile; and that reminiscence was the worst of all. He must get rid of it at any cost. Not there, the closeness of the room oppressed him; he would go out into the air and walk it off.

Into the teeming thoroughfare, teeming still, but with a very different population from that thronging it during the day. The Miranda Music Hall, bowing itself under the strong arm of the law, was closing its doors, turning off its gas, and turning out the customers, who would willingly have remained there for three or four hours more. Out they came, streaming into the street, a motley crew. Boy clerks, with wizened old faces and youthful figures; dissolute vagabonds, knights of the pavement and heroes of the kennel; and women—among whom, Great Heavens! Heath saw the face which had risen so often before his mental vision that night. The same face, but oh, how different! The light had died out of the eyes, and the smile had gone from off the lips. The woman was worn, weary-looking, and glaringly dressed. He moved aside in horror; and though her gown touched him as she stepped into a Hansom-cab, which an attendant sprite had hailed for her, she saw him not.

There was no more walking for Mr. Heath that night. He hurried straight home, and put himself to sleep with a strong narcotic.

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[For further select Medical Opinions, see other side.]

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"In giving my opinion of DR. DE JONGH'S LIGHT-BROWN COD LIVER OIL, I have no hesitation in saying that I have not the slightest confidence in any other kind. The effects of DR. DE JONGH'S OIL are sure and most remarkable, especially in that broken-down state of health and strength which usually precedes and favours tubercular deposit; and I never recommend any other sort. The Oil I have had from you was for my own use, and it has certainly been the only means of saving my life on two occasions; and even now, when I feel 'out of condition,' I take it, and like it, unmixed with anything, as being the most agreeable way. I could wish that DR. DE JONGH'S OIL would come into general use, and entirely supersede the Pale and other worthless preparations."

Mr. THOMAS HUNT, F.R.C.S., *Surgeon to the Western Dispensary for Diseases of the Skin*, in a communication to the *Medical Times and Gazette*, writes:—

"In badly nourished infants, DR. DE JONGH'S LIGHT-BROWN COD LIVER OIL is invaluable. The rapidity with which two or three tea-spoonfuls a day will fatten a young child is astonishing. The weight gained is three times the weight of the Oil swallowed, or more; and, as children generally like the taste of DR. DE JONGH'S OIL, and when it is given them, often cry for more, it appears as though there were some prospect of deliverance for the appalling multitude of children who figure in the weekly bills of mortality issued from the office of the Registrar-General."

SELECT MEDICAL OPINIONS.

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Physician in Ordinary to the Queen in Ireland.

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Dr. LETHEBY,

Late Medical Officer of Health to the City of London.

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Dr. PROSSER JAMES,

Lecturer on Materia Medica, London Hospital.

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Sir G. DUNCAN GIBB, Bart., M.D.,

Physician to the Westminster Hospital.

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Original Patent, 1866.

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THE OPAL RING.

THE WEAVING OF THE SPELL. CHAPTER I.

"Lock ho! Lock, lock, lock!"

"Ah, here he is, punctual to his regular time," said old Dan Bradley, the lock-keeper at Streamside, as he threw down the spade with which he had been working in a little slip of kitchen-garden formed out of the peninsula, with the flowing river on one side of it, and the peaceful backwater on the other, "the regular customer as I have had this summer; and the best for the matter of that, always bidding me keep the change out of the sixpence, and never grumbling even when he has to wait for a string of barges to get out of the lock, or one of them screaming steamers that is ruining the place. He must have been here nigh upon three months now, for I recollect the first time I saw him was when I was nailing the new net over the cherry tree to keep them audacious birds off, and now the leaves is beginning to fall like rain."

"Lock, lock, lock!"

"Right you are. Good day, Mr. Haddon," said the old man, taking off his weather-beaten straw hat, and wiping the moisture from his brow, after the exertion of straining at the ponderous gate. "How do you find yourself this afternoon, sir?"

These words were addressed to a tall, strongly-built, broad-chested young fellow, dressed in a blue cap, a striped Jersey, flannel trousers turned up at the ends,

and white canvas shoes; a young fellow whose light blue eyes and short curling fair beard were set off by the deep red bronze with which his handsome face, well turned neck, and shapely muscular hands were covered.

As he sat at his ease in his long light sculling-gig, he looked the embodiment of health, strength, and good humour. "I am all right, Dan," he said, with a cheery laugh, "making the most of my time, you see, for I'm going back to town to-morrow. To town, and to work," he added, with a sigh. "We will make it half-a-crown to-day, old man, as it's the last time; and give us a grip of your hand to say good-bye."

"Good-bye, Mr. Haddon," said Dan, stretching out his fist, knotted and gnarled as a bit of hickory, after carefully rubbing it on his trousers. "You will be coming down next year I suppose; but not alone, if all what people says is true."

"What do people say, Dan?" asked the sculler, looking rather sheepish.

"Oh, not much sir; folks will talk, you know, sir," said Dan; "only if what is said is correct," he added, with a grin, "you'll have to bring rather more of a family boat up from Searle's next year. That gig ain't made to carry a sitter, especially when that sitter's a lady."

"Get out, you rascal," said George Haddon, his face beaming with pleasure, "get out, and let me out of the lock, for I am five minutes behind time already."

"The party as is waiting for you won't have gone away I reckon, though you be a little late," muttered the old man to himself, waving his hat in adieu to the sculler, already some distance down stream; "leastways, if she be, women must have changed a good deal since my time."

Meanwhile the rower pursued his vigorous way, with flashes of light glancing from his dipping oars, over the broad water, flushed with the reflection of the declining sun, under the shadow of arching trees, among little islands covered with nodding flags and rushes, past little gardens of lilies sleeping on the bosom of the stream and swaying with its current, until leaving the general highway, he turned his boat into a quiet backwater, ran her aground at the foot of a gently sloping meadow, and having made her fast to a projecting stump, leaped lightly ashore. Away in the distance, some half mile over the undulating land was to be seen an old manor house, with its imposing stone facade, its gleaming windows, its smokeless chimneys, its indescribable air of solitary stateliness and grandeur. George Haddon looked at it, as he pulled his boating jacket over his shoulders, and shook his fist at it as he muttered, "You are dull enough to look at now, but I wonder what you will be when she's gone. The one sign of life and light that you have had in you for years past is going to leave you—do you know that, you old wretch? And yet I ought not to growl at you, for if it hadn't been for you I should never have known my darling; never have known the happiness which I have enjoyed during the last six weeks. What can have become of her—she has never missed an appointment before, and surely she cannot be prevented on this our last chance of meeting." He turned suddenly as his ear caught the sound of footsteps in the evergreen walk which encircled the meadow, and rushed off, with both hands extended, exclaiming, "Darling."

"Darling," was about nineteen, with dark brown hair lying between her shoulders in a broad twisted queue, with dark hazel eyes, impudently provoking nose, a very kissable rosebud mouth, and sound wholesome teeth. "Darling" was of middle height, becomingly dressed in blue flannel, with a white flannel sailor's collar and cuffs, a hat knowingly turned up on one side and lined with blue, very trim about the boots and gauntlets, and

altogether very charming. "Darling's" name was Marian Dudley, but her intimates called her Minnie; and, somehow, she looked more like it.

"Don't say I'm late, George," she commenced, holding up her finger in deprecation of an expected attack. "Mrs. Bostwick absolutely refused to take her nap, and I thought I should never get here."

"You are here now, darling," said George, placing her arm in his, and taking her hand as they strolled up the walk, "and so there is no more to be said."

"Yes, but I can only wait five minutes," said Minnie, "at the most. It would have been awful, you know, if I hadn't been able to meet you this last time, when we have to say good-bye, and so I said that I must go to the vicarage, but that I would be back directly."

"This is better than the vicarage, pet," said George, bending over her and looking down into her eyes.

"Yes, I know it is," said Minnie; "but it would be horribly awkward if anyone were to go there and find I hadn't been. I would not mind it's coming out tomorrow after I have gone away, for Mrs. Bostwick does not correspond with uncle James, and she will have forgotten all about it by the next time I come here."

"The next time you come here you will have me to act as your chaperon," said George; "have you forgotten that, Minnie?"

"No, indeed, I have not forgotten," she said. "I think of nothing else. I have been thinking of it all night, George, and I have decided it would be far best for you to write to uncle James."

"I would sooner see him," said George; "there is nothing like facing a man when you have anything important to say to him."

"Yes, that's all very well," said Minnie; "but uncle James is so very peculiar. To me he is all kindness; if I were his own child he could not be more affectionate, but his manner with other people is very odd and abrupt; and as you are equally high-spirited, I think it far better that in the first place you should write to him."

"Very well," said George, "I will do so. The most important letter I shall have ever written in my life will not be a very long one. I shall merely tell him that I love you, and that I have your permission to ask his sanction to our marriage."

"That is all," said Minnie, with a little move, "quite a slight affair, isn't it?"

"And I am not to see you until I get his answer?" said George, not heeding her.

"Most certainly not," said Minnie. Then seeing he looked a little hurt, she pressed his arm and added, "Dearest George, I dare not attempt it. It's easy enough to deceive poor old Mrs. Bostwick, here, who thinks we never meet except when I am duly chaperoned by her, but it would be a very difficult matter with uncle James; besides, to tell the truth, I would not attempt to deceive him. I owe all I have in the world to him, and he is so very kind and generous, that I could not be such a wicked little wretch."

"All right," said George, with a sigh. "I will not ask you again. You go up to-morrow morning?"

"Yes," said Minnie, "by the express. Mrs. Gordon, the vicar's wife, goes with me, and uncle James meets me at Paddington."

"I thought I might have a chance of travelling with you," said poor George, "but the vicar's wife knocks that idea on the head. Oh, Minnie, darling, how shall I exist without seeing you?"

"In hope, dearest," she replied, in a more serious tone than she had hitherto used, "in the hope that this our first parting may be our last; for when uncle James knows that my happiness is at stake—I shall not hide from him the feeling I have for you—he will do anything to ensure it. Hark, there is the dressing bell, and I have only two minutes to stay. See, George," she said, lifting her collar, "I am wearing the locket you gave me yesterday. I have put it on to a chain which I have had for years, and I will never leave it off while I live. And now I have something for you in exchange. I saw it once in a dressing-case of my uncle's, and admired it so that he gave it to me. Now I give it to you, and you must promise me always to wear it in remembrance of me."

As she spoke she took from her pocket a ring and slipped it on to his little finger. It was a large and brilliant opal, oval shaped, and set in fine diamonds.

"It is wonderfully handsome," said George, examining it.

"So I thought," said Minnie, "but my uncle evidently did not attach much value to it, though it seemed to possess some kind of fascination over him too. He looked

at it long and lingeringly, and seemed at first reluctant to part with it."

"It shall never quit my finger," said George, "unless you claim it again when you are my wife."

"Now I must go," said Minnie, "I must indeed. Good-bye, George, dearest; you know how much I love you, and how anxiously I shall await uncle James's reply to your letter. We have nothing, I think, to fear, for even had he any prejudice against you, I think I have sufficient influence to overcome it."

For one instant he wound his arm round her and pressed his lips to hers; the next she was flying towards the house, while he stood gazing after her, silent and motionless.

When George Haddon stepped into his boat again the sun had sunk and the sky was of a dull leaden hue, a chill wind too was blowing, lashing the river into wavelets, and sighing drearily amidst the willows and alders on the bank. George's heart was heavy within him; but there was a stiff stream to pull against; the exercise did him good, and when he reached his rooms at the riverside inn his spirits were calmer and more hopeful, even though, to his fancy, the opal ring seemed to flash forth gleams of somewhat baleful light.

CHAPTER II.

THE friends of Mr. James Legrave, who were invited to dine with him three or four times during the year, at his residence in Harley-street, were in the habit of remarking that the house was well-suited to the man. Their acquaintance with the house was confined to the dining-room, a large and gloomy apartment painted salmon colour, and furnished with dark mahogany chairs with faded leather seats, a very uncompromising and not-to-be-sat-upon sofa, wheeled at right angles to the fireplace, and a huge mahogany sideboard, under which stood a receptacle for wine, also in mahogany, and exactly resembling in shape an ancient sarcophagus. On their arrival, the guests passed the few minutes previous to the announcement of dinner in the drawing-room, which was a still more weird and ghastly apartment. There spindle-legged chairs in chocolate chintz covers were dotted at exact intervals all round the walls, a cold, shiny, rosewood table stood in the middle of the room, having for its sole covering four well-bound, antiquated, and unreadable books, a model of the Leaning

Tower of Pisa under a glass shade, and an enamelled paper weight, and there a bronze Ariadne sitting on a panther on the top of the black marble clock in the middle of the mantelpiece kept eternal watch over the Parian vases, with nothing in them, on either side of her. When they got home, such of the guests as were blessed with wives, prosperous proctors, rubicund solicitors, and elderly barristers with snug sinecures, would slyly compliment their spouses by compassionating their recent host's celibate state. "Such a pity Leagrave never married," they would say, "most forlorn-looking place his, no sign of a woman's touch about it."

And yet if those worthy gentlemen had been let into the secret, which they were never likely to be, for Minnie had obtained from her uncle an assurance that she should never be called upon to play hostess on these occasions, or to make the acquaintance of "his old foggy friends," they would have found within the four walls of the Harley-street house an apartment which would have put their preconceived notions to the rout. That green-baize double door on the staircase, which such of the old boys as noticed it on their downward passage to dinner, believed to be the entrance to a smoking-room, wondering they were never asked there to finish the evening with a cigar, really led to a large passage, at the end of which was Minnie's boudoir, her own room, which none save the privileged were allowed to enter. Such a little room! In rose-coloured silk and walnut-wood, with *étagères* and what-nots, velvet brackets, and all the frivolity of upholstery in every possible and important place, with a small grand piano, at which Minnie used to warble, and a rosewood Davenport, with a paper stand always full of note-paper and envelopes radiant with cipher and monogram worked in every kind of expensive way, at which Minnie used to write. At the end of the room a little conservatory, full of sweet-smelling plants, where a little fountain played and little gold fish swam, and the gas jets were cunningly hidden behind swinging baskets or stained-glass shades.

This room was the outward presentment of the sole, supreme, and absolutely unspoiled satisfaction of Mr. James Leagrave's life. He was a prosperous man, and he took a certain pride in his prosperity, but he was not a happy man. A casual observer, who should give himself the trouble to study Mr. James Leagrave's

countenance, and to listen to his remarks when any subject removed from the range of mere business discussion was under consideration, would have had no difficulty in pronouncing him to be a moody man of unsociable disposition—not inconsistent with a kind heart, for of such he was indisputably possessed—and the last person in the world to be suspected of a "weakness" in the line of the affections. The existence of Mr. Leagrave's niece was, of course, known to such of his associates as had any claim to be regarded as intimates as well, but little more than that fact was known about Minnie Dudley. That the penniless child of the dead sister of this cold and gloomy man lived in his house in an atmosphere of luxury which any scion of aristocracy would have been content to breathe, and hold in his heart a place which only an unusually beloved child is supposed to claim, would have filled with amazement all the "old fogies" against whom Minnie protested so effectually.

Her position did not give rise to much reflection on the part of Minnie Dudley. She had always been used to it. She had no memories of childhood apart from her uncle's loving care; she had no standard of contrast, and her heart turned to the cold, stern man, who was never cold or stern to her, "free as bird on branch." No sense of obligation had ever burdened it, no hard lesson of the difference between her fate and that of other children, orphans like herself, had ever chilled it. She had been carefully educated, according to her uncle's notions of a woman's fitting education, under his own superintendence, to an extent which would have completed the astonishment of his friends, if it had come to their knowledge; but of "the world"—in the sense of its harsh dealing and interested calculation—she had been taught nothing. That when time should bring her a dearer interest—a closer tie in life—it could produce any chill, any lessening of that which bound her to her uncle, was an idea which never crossed Minnie's mind.

We find Minnie in the room which had so much meaning for James Leagrave, one morning, three days after her return to London, in a deep reverie, with her head bent, and her hands idly clasped before her. She was thinking of George, wondering whether she were really worthy of that deep love in which she knew he held her, taking herself to task for the

flighty way in which she had often treated him, and inwardly promising amendment when she should be married. As she was in her day-dream, she felt a light touch upon her shoulder, and looking up, saw her uncle standing by her side.

A tall, spare man, over fifty years of age, a man who must have been handsome before time or trial had stamped the crow's-feet round his eyes, and the deep indentations in his cheeks; and who, with his curling iron-grey hair, his clean-cut features and his erect figure, was still noticeable and distinguished looking.

"Uncle," she cried, "how you startled me! I was in a day-dream and never heard your footstep, else I should have roused myself to receive you in my territory with proper honour."

She had risen from her seat, and was about to make him a mock reverence, but she caught the expression of his face, and stopped suddenly.

"What is the matter?" she said. "You surely are not vexed at my folly?"

"No, child, not the least in the world," said Mr. Leagrave quietly. "As you say, I seldom venture into your territory, and should not do so now, were there not a matter of great importance on which I have to speak to you. Sit you down again, child, while I take this chair, and we will discuss the subject."

Minnie's gaiety had vanished, her heart sunk within her, and her face grew deadly pale; she had an instinctive knowledge of what her uncle was going to say, and trembled at the result.

"I have received a letter," said Mr. Leagrave, fixing his earnest eyes upon his niece, "from Mr. —," he seemed to have difficulty in forcing out the name, "from Mr. George Haddon, a gentleman who tells me that he recently made your acquaintance while you were staying at Streamside with Mrs. Bostwick. That is so?"

Minnie bowed her head in acquiescence.

"He proceeds to say that he has fallen in love with you, that you are aware of his feelings, and that you have referred him to me for a reply to his formal proposal for your hand. That is also true?"

This time Minnie found voice enough to say "Perfectly true" in reply to the question.

"Marian," said James Leagrave, bending forward and speaking in a deep, thrill-

ing tone, "I would rather see you dead than the wife of that man."

"Uncle!" cried Minnie, shrinking back, "what can you know of George? What can——?"

"If you have any love for me," said James Leagrave, interrupting her, "in return for the love which I have showered upon you; if you have any gratitude for your rescue from what would have been a life of poverty and drudgery, and for the position which I have given you; if you have any desire that my future should not be more solitary, more care-worn, and more embittered than is my present existence, I conjure you, if any feeling for this young man has taken root in your bosom, to pluck it up and cast it away."

Minnie buried her face between her hands and was silent.

"For the first time, during all the long years in which you have lived under my roof," he continued, with deep tenderness in his tone, "I speak strongly to you, and I insist upon your obedience. What my reasons are for being thus exacting you need not ask, for you will never know. It must suffice you to believe that they must be strong indeed when they impel me to speak thus to one whom I so dearly love. Minnie, the attachment between us two is no common kinsmanly affection; you have been accustomed to look upon me as a father, and I could not have loved a daughter more devotedly and unreservedly; but, understand me plainly, with such horror and loathing do I look upon this proposed alliance, so convinced am I of the ill-fortune which it would bring upon us all, that if you set yourself up in opposition to me, and refuse to cancel any pledges you may have given to this young man, in one instant I will renounce the affection which has been the growth of years, and cast you off for ever."

"Uncle," said Minnie, turning her tear-blurred face towards him, and extending her hand, "may I not speak?"

"Nothing that you could say can affect my determination," said James Leagrave, impetuously. "One would think that there need not be much hesitation in deciding between the claims of one person who has nourished and cherished you since your childhood, and of another whom you have known but for a few weeks. But there is no time for hesitation. You must give up this man,

or you must give up me. I declare solemnly that, merely taking your own future into consideration, I would rather you were dead than you should bear his name!"

There was silence for a few moments; then Minnie said, in a broken voice, "What would you wish me to do?"

"I would have you examine your own heart, before you decide," said James Legrave. "I would bid you let your memory wander back over the years which have passed since I brought you to this house, a little child, and try to recall whether I have ever done anything which was not dictated by the deepest and purest affection for you. What I have done must be the guarantee for what I am doing now. It is not, it never will be possible, except, perhaps, when I am on my death-bed, to give you the reasons for this arbitrary, and, as it may appear to you, tyrannical behaviour."

"What would you wish me to do?" repeated the girl, sobbing convulsively.

"Oh, Minnie," continued James Legrave, apparently not heeding her, but speaking in a more tender and more pleading tone than he had yet adopted, "is the sacrifice which I ask you to make so very great? You have known this man for a few weeks, for two months at most; and you have been the light of my life, the one ray of joy in this dark and solitary house, for seventeen years. I no longer command, I implore you to give him up. Can you hesitate between us?"

"I will do your bidding," said Minnie, raising her head. Her tears had stopped, and there was a stern expression in her face.

"Even so," said James Legrave, coldly. "So that you are saved from future destruction, my end is accomplished. I will write a formal reply to this gentleman, but it must be supplemented by a letter from you. In cases like this," he added, in a low tone, "an answer is not considered conclusive unless under the hand of the principal."

"I will write whatever you dictate," said the girl, with a gesture of despair.

"Not so," said her uncle. "Use your own sense, and your own words; exonerate yourself, and lay all the blame on me. I only make one stipulation, that is, that you should give him no hope, and leave him in no doubt; there must be no attempt at a reversal of the decision. It has been reserved for—for Mr. George Haddon to impart into our lives the one painful sub-

ject which has ever arisen between us; his name, and his aspirations, must never again be mentioned."

CHAPTER III.

THE red-faced morning sun which, on the day after the interview between Minnie Dudley and her uncle, looked down through the brooding November fog upon the tall gaunt house which stands at the corner of Wastepaper Buildings in the Temple, saw some odd sights, and found several of the denizens of that nest of legal luminaries very differently situated from what was supposed to be their normal position. In the ground floor, for instance, it found that great orator, Mr. Sergeant Scrunch, who is believed by his eloquence to bend Parliamentary Committees to his will, but who was then sitting mute and tongue-tied opposite to his indignant wife, who had followed him down to chambers for the purpose of obtaining a cheque for the domestic expenditure, and who was pouring forth a very flood of oburgation on the subject of her husband's meanness, against which the unfortunate Sergeant could make no head. On the first floor it discovered Mr. Bullenden, Q.C., mixing a seidlitz powder, and endeavouring to master the contents of a French note, written in a very shaky scrawl on pink paper, while his ante-room was filled with attorneys, who were assured by the clerk that the great man was engaged in consultation on a most important matter. In the second floor, Mr. Netherton Whiffle, that rising junior, was deep in colloquy with an unshaved individual in a smeary fustian suit, and a battered white hat with a black band, the topic of interest being the price to be paid for the restoration of Mrs. Netherton Whiffle's favourite dog, which had been "found" by some of the unshaved man's friends, and which was then tied up in a back kitchen of an empty house at Wapping. But, strangest sight of all that the red-faced sun looked upon that morning was in the top story of the same house, where abode Mr. George Haddon, a young man of fortune, who had been called to the Bar, but who never had, or wished to have, any practice, and who, from his happy disposition and general easy-going temperament, was known among his friends as "The Smiler."

Scarcely an appropriate appellation, though, for the young man under present circumstances. His shirt is open at the throat; he unbuttoned it a few

moments ago, when he thought he should have choked; his hair, usually so neatly arranged, has been pushed from off his forehead, and stands erect in a rough and tangled, but not unpicturesque, mass; his hands are thrust deep into the pockets of his dressing-gown; his slippered feet are tattooing on the floor; his eyes glare; his teeth are tightly set, while before him on the table lies a letter, to make room for which the untasted breakfast has been pushed aside.

"Incredible!" he mutters. "If the words were not there in black and white, and in her handwriting, which I know so well, I never would have believed it: 'Never to meet again,' 'eternal farewell,' 'duty and obedience to him to whom she owes everything in life.' The old jargon of the novelist, which has done duty a hundred thousand times, and which is not yet considered worn out. Why did she lead me into a fool's paradise by false hopes and simulated preference. She might have amused herself with me when there was no one better for her to try her hand upon, but it was too cruel to deceive me to this extent, when, a month ago, a word would have saved my making such a fool of myself.

"Can it be of her own free will that she has done this, or has she given in to the desires of her uncle, that uncle of whose kindness and regard for her she was always speaking? Puppet to her uncle's threat, and servile to a savage tongue. That's what it is! She could never have been so false, she, my Minnie, my own darling, whose little hand lay in mine not three days since, as she looked up into my eyes, and told me she would wear the locket I had given her as long as she lived! Here's her ring, too, which has never left my finger since she put it on! It's too horrible—it seems impossible to believe! and yet here's the letter, written in a confidently unmistakeable clear hand: 'unable to accept your flattering proposal for Miss Dudley's hand, and am authorised by her to decline any further communication.' Flattering proposal! I only wish—What a fool I am!" he cried, as he threw himself into a chair, and the tears welled into his eyes. "I had no notion how I loved that girl until now, when I feel that I do not care what becomes of me, that life is impossible without her. I can't stay here. I should go mad! I'll go back to the river, to the places where we used to meet, and—What shall I do! what shall I do!"

He leaned his head on the table, and covered his face with his hands. When he looked up again there were traces of tears in his eyes, and his cheeks were very white.

"I cannot stand it," he muttered. "I cannot go on here with my usual life, knowing that she was within a mile of me, without making an attempt to see her, and thus lowering myself in her eyes. She is desperately proud, and if she has pledged her word to this man she will keep it: nothing would induce her to break it, and she would only think badly of me for endeavouring to make her. The mere thought that she was there, with a crowd of fellows round her, no doubt, would drive me mad. I must go away, far away, America or somewhere, until I have forgotten her, or at least until I can bear to think of her very differently from what I do now! Yes," he said, after a few minutes' reflection, "that's the only chance! Get right away somewhere, where I shall have nothing to put me in mind of her; not even the ring, for I must send that back, of course." He raised his hand to his lips as he spoke, and kissed the opal ring fervently. "Not yet, though, I'll wear it to the last, and post it to her just before I step on board the steamer at Liverpool. I ought to be horribly savage, I know, but I'm only stumped and smashed, for I loved her with all my soul, and I love her still."

He had rung the bell, and his servant stood at the door.

"Get me a hansom, Wilson," said George; "and while I'm away just look through my clothes, and see what I shall want for the next six weeks. I start for America on Saturday, and I shall take you with me."

"Yes, sir," said the man, who was too well trained to exhibit the slightest sign of surprise.

"Now to tell the madre about it," said George to himself when the servant had left the room; "and that's perhaps the hardest bit of the whole affair. She will never understand that her son could be refused by anyone, especially by a girl with nothing particular in her birth and position; and she will look upon me with anything but admiration in the first place for having fallen in love at all, and in the second for giving up so quietly. Dear old madre! she has more spirit in her even now, at her age, than I have, and she will be furious at the whole affair. Hansom

here, Wilson. All right. Now for a pleasant scene in Portland Place!"

George Haddon, on arriving at his destination, was shown at once into the drawing-room, in a corner of which, near the window, he found his mother seated, engaged in knitting. A tall, stately old lady, Mrs. Haddon, with the regular features which she had transmitted to her son, who in that respect greatly resembled her; her iron-grey hair dressed high above her forehead in stiff curls, each curl being kept in its place by a small comb. She wore a dark plum-coloured silk gown, with a large white lace cape crossed over her shoulders, and plenty of delicate falling lace round her small and still plump white hands. As she stood erect, and looked keenly and somewhat defiantly out of her bright black eyes, the lustre of which Time had been unable to quench, it was impossible to avoid feeling that she was not an ordinary commonplace member of society, but a woman with a story, one who had suffered and been strong, and who even now seemed dowered with the "scorn of scorn, the hate of hate," if such feelings had been aroused in her.

Not by any means a demonstrative old lady, she put her hand on her son's shoulder as he bent over her, and touched his cheek with her lips.

"Twice in one week!" she said, with eyebrows uplifted in astonishment. "I am honoured indeed! It was only two days since you came to tell me of your return."

"And now I am here on a very different errand," said George, putting a chair close to her side. "I am going away again at once."

"Not back to the river, I should hope," said Mrs. Haddon. "Those places are unhealthy at the fall of the leaf, with mists and other horrible things. Brighton would be much better."

"I am going further than Brighton, mother; I am going to America," said George.

"Indeed!" said Mrs. Haddon, with perfect composure. "Someone—oh, Charles Fanchope—was here yesterday, to tell me he is going to America. So many young men go there now-a-days. I suppose it is an amusing place."

"I hope I shall find it so," said George, moodily, for he was somewhat surprised at the calm manner in which his mother had received the intelligence of his intended departure; "I am going in search of distraction."

"What a restless being you are, George!" said Mrs. Haddon, laying her knitting in her lap, and contemplating her son. "No sooner in London than you want to start again! I suppose that river place, though, was dreadfully monotonous, and that you require a little excitement after it."

"In that river place, as you call it," said George, "I was happier than I ever was in my life; as happy," he added, after a pause, "as I am miserable now!"

Mrs. Haddon, who had resumed her knitting, again laid it aside. "As you are miserable now," she repeated, folding her hands and bending forward. "You have something to say to me, George. Your visit this morning has a purpose. Why do you not tell me what it is?"

"Mother!" said George Haddon, "you have guessed rightly. I came to say good-bye to you, for I am going to America; but I came also to tell you—there is no one else in the world to whom I could tell it—the reason of my going."

"Speak, George!" said Mrs. Haddon. "We do not see much of each other now, it is not likely that we should; I am an old woman and you a young man, but we are mother and son still; and if you are in trouble, as I judge, it is natural that you should come to me before anyone else. What is it, George?"

"The old story, mother—love!"

Mrs. Haddon's eyes flashed under her knitted brows, and she shrugged her shoulders impatiently. "Ay!" she muttered, "it is time for that, I suppose! The only wonder is that it has not come before! Well, George—you have been in love?"

"Have been, and am!" said George, "with the prettiest, the most —"

"Spare me, please!" said Mrs. Haddon, holding up her hand, "recollect I am an old woman, and spare me! I am perfectly willing to take all the lady's charms for granted. Did you meet her at this river place?"

"Yes," said George, considerably abashed. "She was staying with some friends in the neighbourhood. Her name is Dudley, Minnie Dudley, and—and I fell in love with her."

"Did you tell her so, or at all events take care to let her see it?" asked his mother.

"I told her, and a week before I left I asked her to marry me."

"Practical, but somewhat injudicious after so short an acquaintance," said Mrs. Haddon, with a hard smile. "What did

Miss—I presume she is Miss—Dudley say?”

“She accepted me conditionally. She told me that she was an orphan, brought up by, and wholly dependent on an uncle, who loved her as if she had been his own child.”

“Not generally a characteristic of uncles,” said the old lady, “well?”

“Minnie would do nothing without her uncle’s knowledge—nothing, I mean, definite. I offered to go and see him, but she thought it better that I should write, saying that though he was kindness itself to her, yet he was an odd man, somewhat of a cynic so far as I could make out, and as I had a temper of my own—or at least she said I had—it would be advisable that we should not meet.”

“Miss Dudley seems to have common sense, at all events,” said the old lady. “Did you write?”

“I did, and this morning received a reply. The uncle is unable to accept my flattering proposal, and on behalf of his niece begs leave to decline any further communication.”

“But does he give no reason?” said Mrs. Haddon. “Are you too poor for these people—not sufficiently well-bred? Does the man object to your having courted his niece without his knowledge? He must say something—what is it?”

“He says nothing beyond what I have told you, mother. I left the letter at chambers, but I have repeated to you the very words.”

“And is it this rebuff which has decided you upon leaving England, George; which has rendered you miserable, and turned the current of your life? This, and nothing else?”

“This, and nothing else,” said George. “Mother, I can’t tell you how I love that girl! I’ve been knocking about London for the last five or six years, with as many temptations, and having as many flirtations as most fellows, I suppose, but I never cared for anyone before.”

“I don’t think there is any occasion to take the matter *an grand sérieux*, George,” said Mrs. Haddon, in a graver and more kindly tone. “I am an old woman of the world, and though my experience is small, having had no daughters, yet I was young myself once, and in love. Depend upon it there is some mistake in this matter! You are young, good-looking—I may say so, though you are my son—and a gentleman. You have plenty of means to

maintain Miss Dudley in a position quite equal, I should think, to any which she has ever enjoyed. This man has never seen you, and fancies, likely enough, that you are some idle, worthless young fellow, trying to entangle his niece into a promise of marriage. He must be shown his mistake. You must call upon him, let him learn who you are, and I’ll engage that after a time he will modify his tone, and be only too glad to have a Haddon as a suitor for his niece!”

“Do you think so, mother?” said George, with a ray of hope lighting up his handsome features. “If you could only make me believe that!”

“I do think so, my boy!” said the old lady, laying her hand affectionately on her son’s. “I am sure of it! Why, if only—Good God! what’s that?” she suddenly cried, in a shrill tone, pointing with her finger to the opal ring. “Where did that come from?”

Her eyes were starting from her head, her outstretched finger trembled with emotion, and her breathing was hard and quick.

“What?” cried George, looking up at her in astonishment; “the ring? Oh! Minnie—Miss Dudley—gave me that when I parted from her.”

“Where did she get it? Do you know? Tell me, quickly!” said Mrs. Haddon, still quivering with excitement.

“Certainly; from her uncle, who had had it a long time.”

“His name—what is his name?” cried Mrs. Haddon.

“Legrave—Legrave! Good heavens, mother, what is the matter?” cried George, springing up, as the old lady, with a cry, fell backward in her chair.

With a great effort Mrs. Haddon recovered herself.

“It is nothing,” she said, after a moment’s pause, “nothing to be alarmed at! Let me look at that ring again, George!”

He held out his hand, and she examined the ring carefully, but without touching it.

“Take your hand away,” she cried, with a shudder. “George, you know me to be a tolerably clear-headed, common-sense woman! At least you have known me as such hitherto; what will you think now when I tell you that all that I said to you just now, I revoke! Forget your life of the past three months, pluck the remembrance of Miss Dudley from your heart! It will be best, for she will never be anything to you!”

"Never be anything to me—Minnie?—nothing to me? Why, mother, what has caused you to change your opinion in this extraordinary manner?"

"Don't ask me for my reasons, it is impossible that I can give them! Let it suffice for you to know that they are all-powerful! You will never marry Minnie Dudley, George; never, at least, while James Legrave is alive to prevent you!"

"What makes you think that, mother?" asked George. "Do you know this Legrave? have you ever seen him?"

"I can tell you nothing," said Mrs. Haddon. "I will tell you nothing, except that you must give up this girl! George!" she added, with a sudden softening of her voice, "you are my son, and I love you dearly, as dearly as any mother who makes far greater show of affection, and seeing your heart was set on this marriage, I was prepared to help you to the utmost. But I cannot do it now, and if I could it would be of no avail."

"What then, mother, do you counsel me to do?" said George, upon whom the despondency of the morning was fast settling down again.

"Go abroad as you proposed to do when you first came here this morning," said his mother. "Go abroad, to America, anywhere; only stay long enough until you have completely cured yourself of this passion. And, before you go, return this ring to Miss Dudley; or, if you have still a feeling for her and wish her well, take it with you and throw it overboard as soon as you are in deep water. But in no case keep it, if you wish for happiness again. Now, leave me, please! Come and see me again before you go. I have more to say to you, but now I am tired and overcome. Ring the bell as you pass, and tell them to send my maid to me."

She put her arm round him, and kissed him affectionately; then leaned back in her chair, and before he had left the room was lost in reverie.

When George Haddon found himself back in his rooms at the Temple, he threw himself on to the sofa, and began to pass in review all that had transpired at his mother's house.

"I can't understand it," he muttered after a time. "There is never much to be made out of the madre, who is always remarkably self-contained, and she surprised me very much by her burst of affection, and her declaration that I should get the better of this objection, and be

received by Legrave as a proper suitor for his niece. She was so earnest about it that she almost persuaded me into the belief. Consequently the shock was greater when, apparently without the slightest motive, she turned round and—Now what the deuce can it have been which upset her in that way? At sight of the ring she turned deadly white, and I thought was going off into a faint. What a strange thing, now, that the madre should have been affected in that way! I've heard of the superstition that opals are unlucky stones, but I should have thought that with her strength of mind she would have been the last person in the world to have believed in such nonsense. And yet there must be something more in it than that, after all. Why did she ask me for the name of Minnie's uncle? and why, when I told her, was she so painfully distressed? From that moment she abandoned the counsel which she had previously given me, and declared that all attempts to reverse Mr. Legrave's decision must be futile. What can she have known of Mr. Legrave, to make her speak so positively about him? Why did she so peremptorily refuse to give me any explanation about it? It is a most mysterious business altogether," said George Haddon, rubbing his eyes; "and I am now more determined than ever to get away and do my best to forget all about it."

At that moment the servant entered the room.

"What is it, Wilson?" asked George, looking up. "Have you begun your packing?"

"Yes, sir," said Wilson; "just doing it now, sir. Boy come for the Times, if you please, sir."

"There it is," said George, pointing to the paper. "No! let him leave it. I want to see which of the Cunard line sails on Saturday. I hope it may be the Cuba," he muttered, after the man had left the room; "I know some of her officers, and they might help to rouse me out of this horribly desponding state."

He took up the paper, and throwing himself back in his chair, began glancing over it in search of the information he required. While thus engaged, the following advertisement caught his eye:—

"CLAIRVOYANCE AND MESMERISM.—Professor Longueville may be consulted at his residence, 44, Adelberg Terrace, Coburg Square, by appointment only."

"Longueville!" said George; "that's the man who cured Tom Holdsworth's sister of epileptic fits, the man about whom Jennison was speaking the other day; who, while in a trance at this Adelberg Terrace, exactly described Jennison's house at Brighton which he had never seen, the situation of the doors and windows, the peculiarities of the family portraits, and the position of a figure of a dancing Bacchante on the chimney-piece! By Jove! the professor is the very man to help me in my present difficulty! If he is really as gifted as they say, he may be able, by his somnambulency or his mesmerism, or whatever they call it, to tell me the story of the opal ring, to reveal why the madre was so powerfully affected by it, and what it all means. At all events, it's worth trying. I'll send Wilson off with a note, asking for an appointment at once."

In a couple of hours Wilson returned with the reply. Professor Longueville would be happy to see Mr. Haddon at seven o'clock that evening.

CHAPTER IV.

"THIS doesn't look very mysterious!" said George Haddon, as he glanced round the room at Adelberg Terrace, into which he had been shown, punctual to his appointment. "Portraits, thin-faced old Frenchman, décorés, of course; ditto of a handsome old French lady, hair dressed à la Marie Antoinette, and rather like the madre. Bust of Mazzini on the mantel-piece—hallo, Professor, is that your line of politics!—and plaster caricature-statuettes of Roger the tenor, and Rachel, by Danton. Books, La Harpe, Dr. Elliotson on Mesmerism, and the Zoist! Nothing very wonderful in all this. I wonder whether the professor is an enthusiast or a do? Must be one or the other, or probably might be a little of both. That's no business of mine. If he could tell Jennison all that about a house which he had never seen, there is no reason why he should not be able to help me in my little affair."

His soliloquy was interrupted by the entrance of a middle-aged man, with a bald head, a thin worn face, and remarkable eyes. Large thoughtful brown eyes, like those sometimes seen in a stag; no brilliancy in them, no sparkle or lustre, but an expression which, while soft and almost sad, was very intense.

"Mr. Haddon?" said he enquiringly, speaking with a very slight foreign accent,

and glancing the while at George's note, which he held in his hand. "I am Professor Longueville, but—surely it was not you who proposed to consult me. There is no trace of illness about you," he added looking at George's stalwart proportions.

"None, thank Heaven," said George with a smile, "and yet that is my letter in your hand. I have heard of your fame, professor, and I want to see some proofs of it."

"You are evidently not aware, sir," said the professor, stiffly, "that I give consultations for health alone. If you have any other purpose in coming here, I cannot receive you." He moved towards the door.

"Don't misunderstand me," said George, with more earnestness than he had hitherto displayed. "There are mental as well as bodily complaints, and from all I have heard you may be able to give me much relief. I am a friend of Mr. Holdsworth and Mr. Jennison, who have both spoken of you to me."

"Those gentlemen are worthy friends of mine, certainly," said the professor, "but you must be good enough to be more explicit before I go for a consultation."

"I'll speak out frankly, then!" said George. "The fact is, M. Longueville, I am in love. The young lady loves me in return, but her guardian refuses to hear of our marriage, and I am nearly out of my mind about it."

"I pity you very much, sir," said the professor, grimly, "but it is no part of my profession to make love-philtres, or potions to soften the hearts of guardians."

"No! no! but hear me out! I have a fancy—Heaven only knows whether there is any sense in it—that these misfortunes have come about through this opal ring which the young lady gave me; at all events that it has played some important part in former events, which now exercise a baleful influence on my hoped-for marriage."

"The ring is handsome," said the professor, looking at it, "but the stone is unlucky. In the days of Pliny the elder—"

"Yes," interrupted George, "never mind about Pliny the elder, please; what I want to know is this—Can I, through mesmerism, or anything of that kind, learn the story of this ring, to whom it has belonged, what it has gone through, and so on?"

"Undoubtedly!" said the professor. "A somnambulist, while entranced, and put en rapport with the jewel, would see

all that had ever happened to it since its origin, and could tell its history in detail."

"The deuce he could!" cried George. "Why that is exactly what I want. If you can manage to get that for me, I'll give you——"

"We will not go into that part of the question, if you please," interrupted the professor, holding up his hand. "As I have already told you, I only give consultations in the matter of health. But, as you are a friend of two friends of mine, and as you obviously are in earnest in your enquiries, I will see what can be done."

"It's awfully good of you, I'm sure," said George. "You don't know what an immense thing it would be to find out what is the matter, because then some kind of explanation might be made, don't you know, and the thing put right."

"If you will wait here a minute, I will come for you when I am ready," said the professor, as he left the room.

"Going to prepare the hanky-panky, I suppose," said George, when he was left alone. "What an ass I am to have come here on such an errand! I don't know anything about clairvoyance, but I suppose there will be all the tomfoolery of the darkened room, and the raps from the spirits of Julius Cæsar and other distinguished defuncts. I had better have gone straight to old Legrave and had it out with him, instead of wasting my time here, I imagine."

"Will you walk this way, Mr. Haddon?" said the professor at the door. George followed him into a handsome drawing-room, lit with gas and well furnished. A young lady, of delicate lymphatic appearance, with blue eyes and fine hair, was seated at the piano. She rose as George entered, and the professor introduced her as Miss Cornthwaite, "with whose assistance I hope to give you the information you require, Mr. Haddon," he added.

George bowed, and thanked Miss Cornthwaite in anticipation, wondering within himself what on earth she had to do with it.

He had not to remain long in doubt. "I have promised to endeavour to help you in this matter," said the professor, addressing him, "but before commencing the operation, I will say a few explanatory words. The principle which I am going to invoke for your aid is called animal magnetism. By his will and by the power of that faculty by which he moves and breathes, a man can often exercise upon

his fellow-creatures a certain indescribable influence. This is mesmerism or animal magnetism. To establish a connexion between the operator and the patient, there must emanate from him who mesmerises to him mesmerised a something which, for want of a better name, is called the magnetic fluid. This is merely a figurative expression; we know it is not a solid and therefore call it a fluid, but very little indeed is known about it. In order that the mesmeriser may control his patient, it is necessary that there should exist between them a feeling of sympathy both moral and physical. How the physical sympathy is established, you will shortly see. As to the moral bond, it is formed between two persons by the ideas or wishes which occupy them mutually at the time. The first condition necessary for mesmerising is a strong will, the second that the mesmerist should have perfect confidence in his own powers. The third is benevolence, or the anxious desire to do good. I have the two first, I know; your earnestness, Mr. Haddon, inspires me with the hope that I have the third. All the necessary conditions being thus fulfilled, we will proceed with the operation."

As he finished speaking, the professor, after motioning his visitor to the sofa, placed an arm-chair in the middle of the room, with immediately facing it a somewhat higher stool. To the former he conducted Miss Cornthwaite, on the latter he seated himself, having first obtained from George the opal ring, and placed it on the fourth finger of Miss Cornthwaite's right hand. Then he took Miss Cornthwaite's hands within his own, and held them there, palm to palm, for a few moments, while his eyes gazed steadily into her's. The professor's next proceeding was to withdraw his hands, throw them out, and allow them to rest for about the space of a minute upon the shoulders of his patient, and afterwards draw them slowly down Miss Cornthwaite's arms, with a certain light pressure, from the shoulders to the tips of the fingers.

Under this influence a change came over the patient. Her face contracted, there was an evident twitching of the hands, and her arms hung lifelessly by her side.

When the professor noticed these symptoms, he placed his hands above the patient's head, kept them there for about half-a-minute, and then drew them slowly

down, at the distance of an inch or two opposite the face, until they reached the waist, where he leant for a moment with the points of his fingers, then continued the movement slowly along the body to the feet. These "passes" were repeated many times, and George noticed that at the close of each movement the professor took care to shake his fingers. At last he concluded his operation by allowing his hands to meet, and making, at the distance of three or four inches, a few transversal passes before Miss Cornthwaite's face. By this time her eyeballs were upturned, as happens to one about to sleep, and the professor, closely examining her, pronounced her to be in a mesmeric trance.

"Now, Mr. Haddon," he said, "I am about to question her. Do you pay attention to all she says."

George pulled a note-book with which he had provided himself from his pocket, and took his seat close by Miss Cornthwaite's chair.

"You have a ring on your finger," said the professor, addressing himself to his patient. "Can you tell its history?"

"I can," was the reply, delivered in a low but clear voice.

"Let us hear it from the very first," said the professor.

THE FIRST ENTRY IN GEORGE HADDON'S NOTE-BOOK.

You must be patient; for, although I can perceive some Things, I see them only as in a glass, and darkly. They are shadows coming out of a mist, and gaining every moment form and substance; but when they seem close to me, and I would grasp them, lo! they fade away into dim clouds again. It is as though the curtain of a playhouse had fallen while I recked not of it; but there are actors behind that veil, and the murmur of many voices is incessant. So; now the mist clears away, and I can see. Shapes of living men are before me, palpable and tangible; and the murmur of voices rises to a roar.

The Traktir of the Three Emperors at Nishni-Novgorod. During how many years in days gone by have not the daughters of Egypt sung the song, and danced the dance, and touched the Balalaika, and told fortunes to fools, and, with their bright black eyes, wheedled greater fools still to their de-

struction at the Great Fair? The Traktir of the Three Emperors at Nishni-Novgorod! There they are, all three: superbly daubed on the sign-board outside by an artist from Kasan. Here and there accuracy of design and propriety of light and shade may have failed him; but he has atoned for all shortcomings by plenty of bright blues and scarlets, and plenty of gold leaf, or what passes for gold. Tsar Peter Veliké; Tsar Alexandri-Paulowich; Tsar Nicolas-Alexandrovich. Yes; here are the Three Emperors, complete. The artist from Kasan was a devotional painter, much patronised by the clergy. He has given each Imperial Majesty a gilt nimbus, beautifully diapered, encircling his head; and the epaulettes of the Tsar Nicolas are so prodigious that they look well nigh like wings of bullion. In the great inner room of the Traktir, there hangs another picture, more resplendent in colour, and richer in gold-leaf, or what passes for it. It is in a gaudy frame, and in front of it is suspended, by three chains, a small brazen lamp, the flame in which is never extinguished. Nearly all the men who enter the room uncover their heads so soon as they cross the threshold; and, when they pass before this image, they reverently bow, and sign themselves. It is a Panagia, and is from the great religious factory at Kiev, where thousands of similar Panagias are painted and gilt every year. But there are customers of the Traktir of the Three Emperors who neither uncover, nor bow, nor cross themselves in honour of the painting. They stare at it, sometimes with a look of blank surprise, sometimes with an expression of amused interest, oftener with a glance of contempt and disgust. For what significance can the Panagia present to the worshippers of Brahma and Vishnu, to the followers of Mahomet and Moses, of Buddha and Confucius, to the disciples of Luther and Calvin? And they are all here.

Men of almost every physical type and in almost every variety of garb in the world we call civilised, and in most parts of that world which in our conceit we term uncivilised, are here gathered together. They are eating, drinking, smoking, playing at draughts and backgammon, laughing, singing even; but above all things they are buying and selling. This is the Temple of Mammon; and in good sooth, the shrine is exceeding dirty, and the sanctuary reeks with the vilest of odours. Things of sweet perfume are being sold elsewhere

at the Fair of Nishni—myrrh and frankincense, and benzoin; attar from Damascus and spices from Java; aromatically smelling caravan tea; trinkets of sandal-wood; scents, and soaps, and essences from the Paris Palais-royal; trunks and harness, and boots and slippers from the Gostinnoi-Dvor of Moscow and Petersburg, redolent of the perfume of the birch-bark with which the leather has been tanned. But in this House of Mammon only jewels are being sold—things inodorous in themselves, but which become unpleasant when golden imperials are wrapped up in dirty rags or greasy sheep-skin pouches, and when diamonds are revealed from the depths of a blue cotton pocket-handkerchief long secreted in the mangy fur cap of a trader from Amsterdam.

Not a woman is to be seen amidst this crowd. Not until evening are the daughters of Egypt allowed to enter, to dance and sing and tell lies about the future. The hours of the day are given up to business among the men-folks; business, however, carried on with an immense accompaniment of cabbage-soup and sturgeon eating, of cigar and pipe smoking, and notably of drinking. There is tea by the cauldron full—tea drunk hot and drunk cold, tea that looks black and is bitter and nauseous, tea that is golden-hued, and is sweet and fragrant. Still you can obtain stronger beverages at the Traktir of the Three Emperors. Its customers come from all parts of the world; and they may call for the claret and champagne of France, the beer and Rhine wine of Germany, the Xeres and Montilla of Spain, the schnapps of Holland, the brantwein and vodka of the North; and they shall still be served. See; there is a man in a tall hat and European clothes who has just called for a bottle of Dublin stout, and he pays two roubles for it, cheerfully. Men are not sparing of their small moneys at the Fair of Nishni. Troops of waiter-boys ran about the great room of the Traktir, attending to the incessant and conflicting orders of the guests. They are strapping young lads, with fresh, rosy faces, and curly brown hair. They are clad in clean white shirts, embroidered with blue and red at the cuffs and collars, worn over their baggy knickerbockers, and boots reaching to the knee, and girt round the waist with silken sashes of bright tints. These waiter-boys are so many walking tables of foreign exchanges. They know to a kopeck how much a sovereign, a

Napoleon, an Isabellino, a doubloon, a mohur, a Frederic d'Or, a gold eagle may be worth in Russian money; and they know quite as accurately how many kopecks they may cheat a strange customer out of when they give him change. There is not a very great deal of cheating going on; for nearly everybody who frequents the Traktir of the Three Emperors is as sharp as the sharpest razor of Sheffield, and keener than the keenest rapier that ever professed to have been manufactured at Toledo, but was really made at Birmingham. The dealers, too, keep the watchfullest of eyes on the precious wares they are purchasing or vending; and to guard against the intrusion of suspicious strangers, I see sitting at a table close to the door, two gaunt, grizzled-moustached men, in dirty grey coats, buttoned up to the chin, and with round flat caps with bands that were once of silver lace round them. They sit smoking continually, and playing some mysterious game, with an indescribably greasy pack of cards. From time to time the waiter boys bring them drink, tobacco, sausages, cabbage soup, bread and cheese, and what not. Every four hours the couple are relieved by two other men, their very images for gauntness, dirtiness, and capacity for the inhalation of tobacco-smoke and the reception of liquor. These are policemen, but their services are very seldom wanted. Here everybody can take care of himself, and takes it very carefully.

I know the man with the tall hat and the European garb—a travelling suit of grey tweed, such as you might buy on Ludgate Hill—who has just paid two roubles for the bottled beer. He is Mr. Louis Vanderplug, of the great firm of Vanderplug, Brothers, of Amsterdam, dealers in precious stones. Out of the tall hat and the grey tweed travelling suit he is seldom seen. His luggage consists of a small black shagreen dressing bag. In his breast pocket, perhaps, there may be peacefully slumbering a six-barrelled revolver; but that is no present concern of ours. The black dressing bag holds millions: millions worth of diamonds and other of the rarest gems: millions in bank notes and bills of exchange. Vanderplug Brothers do business with all the courts of Europe. Mr. Louis Vanderplug is as well known at Tsarski-Celo as at Schönbrunn, at Laeken as at Marlborough House, at Charlottenburg as at Stamboul. He has rung the area bell at every palace

in Christendom, and has the entrée of all the backstairs. If you ask him if he ever does business at the Vatican, he shakes his head, and tells you that the folks there are rather too wide-awake customers for him. But he goes to Brazil sometimes, and looks in at Washington and New York on his way home. Mr. Louis Vanderplug has had, in his time—he is a hard-set, well preserved man of fifty—somewhat of a surfeit of precious stones; and, in his rare moments of unbending, has been heard cynically to question whether the Regent, the Lazareff, and the Koh-i-noor, all put together, are worth much more than a glass drop from a chandelier with a bit of foil paper neatly stuck at the back.

This present summer Mr. Louis Vanderplug has come all the way from Amsterdam—he paid visits to half a score of Crowned Heads on his way—to the Fair of Nishni-Novgorod to buy—what? Opal. There is plenty of opal in the western markets, but it is not of the kind he wants; and that kind he knows that he can only obtain from Li-Chang.

"No can do," says Li-Chang to Mr. Vanderplug; "no piecey opal general want belongey my pigeon," which, being interpreted, means that Li-Chang professes not to be able to supply the dealer with the article he requires.

"Piecey fire opal go up topline galow, savey," continues Li-Chang; "he muchey more big price than come pay last time. He go up chop-chop muchy more price next pigeon, savey." By this Li-Chang means that "fire" or iridescent and flashing opal has considerably advanced in price since last fair time, and that another and larger increase in rates may be expected before the ensuing year. Mr. Vanderplug knows that Li-Chang is telling falsehoods. He does not in the slightest degree object to his lying: it being part and parcel of the Celestial way of doing business. So he looks very keenly at his friend from the Flowery Land, who has the usual tea-tray face, with the little black currant eyes and the eternal simper, and who is swathed in a long caftan of dubious hue, and trimmed with catskin; and says,

"Very well. You no my pigeon, I no your pigeon. No piecey opal me, no piecey diamond you. And I know you want diamonds, you leering rascal," Mr. Vanderplug continues mentally, and in Low Dutch.

"No can catchee piecey fire opal,"

Li-Chang continues to murmur. "Province mandarin catchee all fire opal belongee Li-Chang. Catchee all him sycee dollar, make Li-Chang eat bamboo. Muscov mandarin catchee more dollar. Make Li-Chang eat stick. Dam thief both pigeon, savey?"

"Muchee bobbery lies, my friend," continues Mr. Vanderplug coolly. "Muchey talkee no my pigeon." And he empties his glass of Dublin stout as though determined to put an end to an unbusiness-like conversation, and begins to draw on one glove. Mr. Vanderplug always wears gloves—dog-skin; eight-and-a-half.

"Ingliz general worse than Mellican," grumbles Li-Chang. Why he calls his interlocutor a general, unless he considers it to be a convertible sum for a gentleman, is uncertain. "Mellican man give big bootey-kick on Li-Chang's shin-leggee. Ingliz much worse. Dutcher worse pigeon than all, topline galow, savey?"

"Bring out your pigeon," Mr. Vanderplug repeats in his steady voice. "Muchey fire opal buys muchey diamond; both muchey sycee dollar pay. All right."

With much more murmuring and sighing and wriggling, over all of which, however, the twinkling of the black-currant like eyes and the eternal simper are predominant, Li-Chang produces from the folds of his caftan, which is not unlike the wonderful dressing robes from which conjurers produce bowls of gold fish and grand pianofortes—I know all their tricks, and they are but shallow rogues at bottom—a kind of leathern satchel, the original colour of which may have been crimson, but which has been dimmed by time and use to the hue of a bullock's liver. This satchel is secured by a broad strap passing round it. Li-Chang undoes the buckle; and he then unrolls the budget, which opens like a 'trousse,' or case of surgical instruments, and, when laid flat, nearly covers the little table at which they are sitting.

"All opal, these, Li-Chang can catchey," says the Chinaman. "Now choose chop-chop what likey belongey buy. Then show Li-Chang much piecey diamond pay muchey dollar." He pushes the case towards the dealer from Amsterdam.

Mr. Vanderplug bends over the case spread out before him, and begins to examine, one after another, the pieces of opal, some cut and unset, others wholly uncut which are nestling in so many little leathern pockets. All this while Li-Chang

continues to simper, and to watch his customer with those little twinkling black eyes of his.

"Hum," muses Mr. Vanderplug to himself, not in pigeon English, you may be sure, but in very grammatical Dutch, "there does not seem to be anything here beyond the vagabond's ordinary stock-in-trade. He certainly has the finest opal in the world, but he's hard to draw—hard to draw. So; what have we here; ah, silica with at least fifteen per cent. of water, and no oxide of iron. Silica and no alkaline earths; I can tell that by feeling. A good play of greens and reds in this 'noble' opal, but no real fire. A nice conchoidal fracture here. A Hungarian girasol: I've seen better from Cornwall. Milky opalescent; not worth a guildler. Bucharian cacholong; not much better than chalcadony. Menilite; I'd just as soon have a petrified sheep's kidney. Tabasheer; you've got that out of the joints of your own bamboos, Li-Chang. Hyalite and Fiorite, and Miller's Glass; you might as well sell me gum arabic." He looks up suddenly at Li-Chang. "No, my pigeon, this," he says, sternly, "good, Hog Lane, Kwantung. No good pigeon, Nishni. Fire opal, you rascal."

"So helpee me chin-chin Joss catchey Heaven," answers the Chinaman humbly, and throwing his hand flat on the table so that his long finger-nails clack on the hard leather "no belongey Li-Chang more fire opal. General, see Hungary girasol pigeon, good fire, but not much goody enough for big dollar price. So help him great grandmother's grave, Li-Chang no lie."

It is observable that when Li-Chang takes one of his ancestor's tombs to witness, he is generally telling the truth: when he swears by his great grandmother's grave he is to be believed, implicitly.

"Very well," observes Mr. Vanderplug, pushing back the jewel case, and drawing on his other glove. "I suppose I must say good-bye, Li-Chang, till next year?"

The Chinaman's eyes twinkle more brightly than ever. He rises in evident agitation, and draws from the vest of his robe a little leathern bag.

"Stoppee," he says, with somewhat of a quivering voice, "one more piecey opal here. Great devil opal. Come Mellican-Mexican mountain—one great devil mountain all opal. Hydrophane, quick, fetchey glass water, come bring."

He produces from the bag a piece of opaque stone, which, lightly immersed in water, assumes all the colours of the rainbow.

Mr. Vanderplug shakes his head. "No my pigeon," he says.

"Then THIS," Li-Chang goes on, his voice assuming in his excitement a sharp treble pitch, "this more precious fire, more precious hydrophane—this opal found Desert of Gobi. Maskey piecy muchee price than Three Emperors, with their pigeon crown. Look General, look chop-chop."

But what Mr. Vanderplug is looking at, as he stoops over something held in the Chinaman's trembling hand, I cannot see, for a thick mist rises, and in the haze the Traktir of the Three Emperors at Nishni-Novgorod and its multitude of drinking and smoking and chaffering guests altogether disappear. The cries of "Tchelovek"—waiter—cease; yet still behind the veil do I hear voices. There is the clear, calm, hard voice of a man talking French as only Russians can talk it:—faultlessly but without emphasis and without melody. There is the voice of a woman conversing in the same tongue, and in rich, soft, mellow tones, but with some dialectical difficulty, however, as though the speaker had but recently acquired the language of France.

"Upon my word, Vafra," says the voice of the man, "you are too exigent. This is the third time this morning that you have asked to look at my jewels. Well, you must be indulged in this, I suppose, as in everything else. There's the key of the malachite casket."

"I love the jewels only for your sake, my Serge," the female voice replies. "Give me the key, that I may seem to see in the glittering gems the sparkle of your eyes. All my diamonds should be yours—are they not yours already?—if you would only try to see the lustre of my eyes in them. But you don't love me, Serge, as you used to do."

"Spoilt child," interposes the voice of the man. "Spoilt child, that would cry for the moon, and expect to find somebody's eyes there. Take the key and be happy."

Slowly and gently the veil before mine eyes melts away, and I behold This:—

A superbly decorated and furnished apartment, which presents in appearance a whimsical mixture of the smoking-room and library of a bachelor, and the boudoir of a woman of fashion. The ceiling is adorned with fluted blue satin, the rays

converging to a centre formed by the golden effigy of a double-headed eagle with outstretched wings. The walls are also hung with blue satin, and the skirting boards are of ebony inlaid with ivory and gold. There is a harp in one corner, a cabinet pianoforte in another. The lower half of one of the windows is blocked up by an aviary full of singing birds; but over the mantel there is a huge trophy of bright burnished weapons—fowling-pieces, matchlocks, bows and arrows, yataghans, Damascus scimitars, daggers and pistols. On the opposite wall is a trophy as large and as sumptuous of chiboucs and narghilés, the amber mouthpieces of some of them encrusted with gems; together with fantastically carved meerschaum pipes and cigar-tubes. There is an abundance of mirrors, and there are many pictures; but of these last the majority are of a frivolous, not to say sensuous kind: "Pets of the Ballet," "Lights of the Harem," "Nymphs of the Sea-side," "Windy days on the Boulevards," and so forth. There is a large aquatint engraving, glaringly coloured, of "Newmarket Cracks" and "Derby Winners." There is a splendidly framed picture in oil of a tall and handsome officer in the full uniform of the Russian Chevalier Guards—cuirass, white tunic, spreading epaulettes, jack boots, silver helmet, and all. Next to this is a head in pastel of a most beautiful woman—young, dark almost to swarthinness, with lustrous black hair, and still more lustrous eyes. She is clad in a half-oriental costume. I know the originals of these portraits perfectly well. They are sitting now, in the sumptuous room, toying, and talking nonsense. The room is one of fifty as sumptuous in a palace on the Great Movskaia, St. Petersburg. The man—he is out of uniform for the nonce, and is wrapped in an embroidered dressing-gown of Persian make—is Prince Serge Vacilikoff, of the Russian Chevalier Guards aforesaid. The woman, about whose limbs floats a gauzy white peignoire, is La Vafra, a Neapolitan of rare beauty, a ballet dancer at the Grand Opera House at St. Petersburg, and who has been living, these twenty months past, under the 'protection' of Prince Serge Vacilikoff. I know him very well. He began life just five years ago with an income of a hundred thousand roubles a year, the revenue of his estates in the government of Tamboff, in which there are not less than fifteen hundred 'souls' or peasants, with cotton factories, pottery works,

dyeing works, saw-mills, and all kinds of means and appliances to add to his revenues. He has led the life of most of the young Russian nobles of his epoch. Drill, debt, dissipation, Dominique's, Chemin de fer and baccarat, champagne drinking—only varied by an occasional trip to Paris, to Florence, to Hombourg, or Baden, or Monaco—these have sufficed to mortgage Prince Serge Vacilikoff's estates to their full value, to plunge him over head and ears in debt, to undermine his constitution, and to harden his heart to the consistence of the nether millstone. He is an accomplished gentleman. He can speak half-a-dozen languages with perfect ease and purity. He can draw and paint and model, play the pianoforte, and do tambour embroidery, beautifully. He is an excellent cavalry officer, and has more than once earned the applause of the Tsar, for his dashing behaviour on the parade ground. Moreover, he is as consummate a scoundrel as you might wish to meet with out of Siberia. His word is as good as his bond; and both are worthless. He is as ready to cheat at cards as to fight a duel with any one who accuses him of cheating; and the infernal ingenuity which he brings to bear on the task of seducing a woman is only surpassed by the alacrity with which he abandons her, when he has grown weary of her society. Of La Vafra, what more need be said, but that she is an Italian, and a ballerina, perfectly illiterate, passionately affectionate, and demoniacally vindictive when her jealousy is aroused.

She does not know that nearly all the jewels in the malachite casket, the contents of which she has been so anxious to explore this morning, are paste, and that the real gems have been long since pawned, to the Armenian usurers of the Apraxin-Dvor. She does not know that her own diamonds—the gifts of I know not how many princes and grandees—have long since gone the way of Vacilikoff's own valuables; and that almost the only precious thing in the casket is a wonderful piece of iridescent Opal, bought for him, so her lover tells her, from a Chinese merchant, by a dealer from Amsterdam, at the fair of Nishni-Novgorod. But there is something else of which she is in quest in this casket. It *must* be there, she thinks. When the key is given her, she opens the box, and takes out and looks at the sparkling lying contents—all but the iridescent Opal, wistfully. She cannot

find the thing for which she is craving. By-and-by Serge is called out of the room to receive a visitor, one of the Tsar's aide-de-camps, who is waiting for him in the grand saloon. Now do I see La Vafra on her knees, holding the malachite casket between her two hands; holding it, quite empty, upside down; shaking it, and putting it to her ear; then throwing it to the ground, and pressing every inch of its innermost surface.

"At last!" she cries, with a spasm of rage, fear, despair, in her voice. Her finger has touched a hidden spring in the casket. There flies open at its base a little secret trap; and from it she draws, with tremulous hands, a tiny gold locket, which she opens, and, with tigress's eyes, glances at the miniature within of a woman with fair hair and blue eyes.

"It is the Countess Katriza Boudinoff," she murmurs, sinking to the ground, and the tears raining down her face. "It is the accursed Lady of Honour to the court who sits in the first box to the left on the grand tier, and eyes me scornfully through her glass every time I dance. It is the Countess Katrina, and he is false to me."

Just then Prince Serge Vacilikoff, placidly whiffing at his cigarette, strolls back into the room. He sees what has been done, and his handsome face turns straightway to that of a white devil.

"Little traitor—little viper!" his highness remarks. "So you have been prying and spying have you? Take that and that." And it is a fact that all Prince, all captain in the Chevalier Guards, all accomplished gentleman as he is, the savage Tartar seizes a riding-switch that lies on the table, and strikes his mistress sharply, raising purple bars on her white shoulders. She utters a shriek of pain and terror; and then, lo! mine eyes are obscured by a mist; and of the room and those within it I can see nothing more. And, behold, the mist is in hue a dull red, as well it may be—well it may be.

What is it I discern for an instant through the crimson haze? Is it the iridescence of that Opal in the malachite casket? Is it the gleam of a Dagger, snatched from the trophy over the mantel by the hand of an infuriated woman, and buried, with lightning rapidity, in the heart of a bad, false, cruel man?

Such would seem to be the dreadful truth, for the mist has cleared away again; and I see the Vafra standing up, her gauzy white peignoire all dabbled in

blood, and her arms tightly held by two police soldiers. A group of lacqueys are huddled in a corner of the room. They dare not approach the corpse of their master; and indeed it would be against the law for them to touch it until Authority had made its first report; and authority, in the shape of a police major, is duly engaged at the task of preliminary investigation, in which the investigator is materially aided by a pint bottle of champagne which has just been brought in on a silver salver by a pallid and trembling maître d'hôtel.

"He struck me with the whip," says La Vafra, calmly; "and I was angry and stabbed him. I meant to kill him. Yet he might have lashed me as in his cruel moments he was wont to lash his hounds, and I would not have murmured. But he was false to me. I loved him, and so I killed him. My Serge! My Serge!" she breaks out, with a piercing shriek; and with a sudden effort of spasmodic power she wrenches her arms from the grasp of the police agents, and flings herself on the body of the dead man.

"This will never do," observes the police-major. "Handcuffs, Sergeant Glasovich. Leg-straps, Polizei Nechoff. She is one of those subjects who kick. So; now then, gently. Stand at ease—attention—march. My droschky is below, and we will take this impulsive lady before the examining judge. The climate of Siberia will have, I am afraid, a somewhat deleterious effect on her complexion. March!"

The police agents lead La Vafra away; but the major lingers behind a little, to set a guard over the corpse, and to finish the champagne: and, perhaps, for some other trifling private motive.

"A remarkably handsome woman," he remarks, looking about him with a thoughtfully inquisitive mien. "She has rid the world of a most eminent scoundrel. I don't think his highness stood very well at court; so she may hope for extenuating circumstances, and get off scot free after all. I wonder," continues the thoughtful police major, "if there are any pretty little rouble notes about. He was deeply in debt, but he must have had a good deal of pocket-money. Jewels! ah, but jewels are dangerous! How that opal shines! Let us look for the pretty little rouble notes."

But the Opal shines no more, and a great black shadow falls over all.

THE SECOND ENTRY IN GEORGE HADDON'S NOTE-BOOK.

AGAIN the question was asked: "Do you see this jewel?"

Again the answer came: "I see it."

"Follow it, from the point of time, and from the place wherein you saw it last, and relate its history. Are you following it. Speak!"

"I am following it."

The look of painful searching was more marked than on the first occasion; she knitted her brow, and made uncertain gestures with her hands. But the brow grew smooth again; the hands clasped themselves in her lap; peacefulness spread itself over the colourless face and the closed eyelids. She sighed deeply and began to speak, in a low, meditative tone.

"The jewel rests. I do not see the man who chose it from among its fellows, to send it forth in gorgeous company of diamonds, full of light, but none of them with a fell red flame at their heart, that it might do its appointed task among men. For a long time the jewel rests in the darkness of a golden casket, and the flame is dull."

"Pass over the time of its rest," said the mesmerist, "and see it when it is in the light again."

After a short pause she spoke.

I am in the kingdom of Morning; in the east. The rose-cloud touches the horizon of sand, and dashes the glorious blue with long level streaks; the air sparkles; it has the desert fragrance in it, the scent which fills men's nostrils with life, and their hearts with yearning for the silence, and the vastness, and the freedom which lie yonder. The golden sunlight—not as yet fierce in its might, but gracious in its splendour like a prince not yet a monarch and crowned with noon—glints upon the waters of a great river. It is the Nile. Many boats, of all shapes and sizes, are afloat upon its yellow waves; above their decks are stretched awnings of gay colours, and from every tint the sun extracts a tribute of brightness. The vessels cluster thickly alongside an island coast; a green island in the sacred river, with long reaches of garden wall, and behind them, and also on the shore, even to the river's edge, groves of the giant palm-trees of Roudah rise in their stately and immortal age.

Among the crowding craft is a large

dabéyah of the old form, and with the old picturesque rigging. The oblique mast and deep orange and brown sails (furled now), are reflected in the amber-tinted water, as is the lotus in white, and green, and gold, which adorns her prow; and has a legend round it, in English and in Arabic, which tells that the boat is called "The Lady of the Nile."

There is a stir upon the broad deck; dusky figures are moving about, in preparation for a presence yet unseen. A wide canopy of Moorish silk—brown, and yellow, and scarlet, with tassels and cords of gold—marks out a space upon the deck. A tall Nubian, clad in snow-white muslin, and wearing a white and gold kufieh turbanwise upon his head, is arranging a pile of gorgeous cushions and a breakfast equipage of antique design in silver. A basket full of ripe figs laid on palm leaves lies on the mat. A tame gazelle, its slender neck encircled with a collar of carved amber beads, looks on with shy playfulness, then starts away to nibble at the spreading leaves of a huge Nile water-lily unfolding its white beauties in a tank cunningly sunk into the deck-planks, where one of its sister lilies died yestereve; where it shall die, torn, like her, from their parent Nile, to-night. The crew are busy at the other end, only her Nubian and her gazelle greet the lady for whom these preparations are made, when she comes on deck, and stands, for all that she is well used to it, entranced in the beauty of the scene.

I see her, this beautiful woman, who looks like the lady and queen of the Nile herself. She raises one hand, and, shading her eyes with it, looks out from under the rose-tipped fingers, at the golden water and the crowding craft, with the sun of Egypt shining on them and the wind from the desert passing over them, awaking soft musical vibrations from the multitude of unseen instruments which thrill to it. Her robe is cream white, with a border of needlework, in the true imperial purple, of Greek design; it falls round her tall, fine figure in graceful folds, bound by a broad belt of needlework. Her head is covered with a square kerchief of the same soft stuff, the finest India can produce, which is fastened back behind the ear on either side by scarabei. These are of great price, being amulets, held in esteem by one of the Pharaohs, from whose tomb among "the kings and councillors of the earth," the first searchers of the secrets of the Pyramids took the carven gems.

The head-tire of the Sphinx yonder, where the outlines of the Three Giants loom upon the far horizon, has some such folds and expression as this lady's. Her face is clear-cut, commanding, and yet winning, with a mouth like a flower, or a shell, for freshness and delicacy, and eyes of the hue of the blue lotus. Her hair, folded and coiled under the bordered kerchief on her head, is black and heavy, and there is no more colour in her cheeks than on the smooth bell of a magnolia. As she stands, shading her eyes with her hand, I see that on the third finger a jewel set in a ring is flashing. The jewel has green and golden gleams in it beneath its translucent surface, and a red flame at its heart. It is the Opal.

The gazelle goes up to the side of its mistress, and she drops the hand with the ring on it caressingly upon its neck, as she advances to the canopied space. She has hardly seated herself upon the cushions before a man comes on deck; but he walks away to the stern of the boat, and passes some time in talking with a man whom he calls Mustafa, before he joins the lady. When he does so, the Nubian brings him coffee, and sets a curious, cumbrous pipe, but very precious, with a betassled flexible tube, and a water-bowl of amber by his side on the deck. He is an Englishman, about thirty, with the English kind of distinction in his face and figure; and he is in love with the beautiful woman into whose eyes there comes a brighter light as he draws near, if ever I saw, in waking life or in trance vision, a man in love.

"I have been speaking to Mustafa about our excursion to Gizeh, and I have told him to find out whether the place is tolerably free from Europeans just now," says the gentleman. "You have not changed your mind, have you, Ianthe?"

"About camping in the sands, and drawing the Pyramids from every point of view?" says the lady, "certainly not. You must think me very capricious, Hugh, to ask me that, when we settled it only last night."

"No, no, not capricious, dearest—but you look so beautiful, and so dreamily happy, and this is all so exquisitely lovely—I thought you might not care to leave the boat to-day. That's all."

When Ianthe speaks, it is not with an accent like his; her words are fluent, and her phrases are correct, but she is not English. Perhaps she is Greek, like her name. I cannot tell; no part of her

history unconnected with the opal which she wears may reveal itself to me. I see the two, and I hear this:—

"Do I look well, this morning, really? I wonder at that, for I have had bad dreams."

"Forget them, or tell them to me, and I will interpret them for you by the rule of contraries. We are in the land, in the very birthplace of dreams, and of their interpretation."

He takes the hand with the opal ring on it in his, and looks seriously into her face, which is touched with gloom.

"It is you and not I who should play interpreter. You look like the sphinx, before she was roughly handled by time and barbarians; with your Egyptian head-dress, and that dream-expression. 'Still gazing on with calm eternal eyes.' The line might have been written for you, my Ianthe."

"I am superstitious about dreams"—she passes over what he has said unnoticed—"they always haunt me. My dreams of last night were indistinct, I cannot tell them to you. They were of being hunted down, stealthily; and the worst was that in my dream I knew there was a way of escape; if I could only throw away something that I was wearing, I should save myself, but I could not remember what it was."

"Edgar Poe comes to my aid, dearest, in this very simple case. We were reading the Arabian Nights' yesterday, and you remarked upon the true tragic meaning hidden under the oriental style at once so bare and so ornate, which lurks in the story of Cassim Baba, and 'Open, Sesame;' upon the smallness of the effort, and its tremendous meaning, and the real horror of the man's situation. Here is, in every sense, the word of the enigma."

"Perhaps so. No more of my dreams. What a crowd of boats! and what a number of them are making for the shore!"

The man called Mustafa, a cunning, wizened, brown personage, approaches, and claims the gentleman's attention. Meanwhile, Ianthe observes the growing animation of the scene—the song of the Nile boatman is heard as boat after boat shoots past the motionless dabéyah—and she watches the long strings of camels and asses winding their way to the landing-place on the right bank of the river. She raises a field-glass to her eyes, and again I mark the many-tinted gleam of the opal and its heart of flame. She

observes it too, as she lays the glass down, and is idly turning the ring about in the light when her husband approaches her.

"Our invaluable rascal of a dragoman—what a scoundrel and treasure that Mustafa is!—wants, no doubt for some reason of his own, to persuade us to put off our expedition to the Pyramids, until after the great festival which comes off at Cairo next week. It seems that once a year the Viceroy sends a carpet, which these people call a 'kisweh,' to the great Mosque at Mecca, in honour of the Prophet, and that the departure of the Embassy, conveying the precious gift, with the train of pilgrims, is a curious spectacle. What do you say? It's only a little change of programme, Cairo first, instead of the Pyramids."

"I should like it very much."

Again he leaves her, again he returns.

"I have come to terms with Mustafa. You don't forget that our letters must be written to-day? What a nuisance they are! But I must not complain; they are the sole interruption to our comfort. What a successful notion that was of mine, Ianthe, that we should pass our honeymoon on the Nile!"

"Honeymoon! I don't like that one English word—that one English idea—it measures out happiness, it cuts up love into 'portions,' like a *déjeuner à la carte*, of different flavours. Besides, it's absurd. We have been married two months; our honeymoon is over. Is there any change?"

"None." He looks at her, meaning what he says. "None. Ours is a honeymoon that will last for ever."

His glance falls on the opal ring.

"Ah! you have unpacked your jewel-case at length, and deign to wear my gift, although it is not antique, and must clash with your notions of the poetic harmony of jewels. Scarabei of the Pharaohs' time, and goldsmiths' work from the Rue de la Paix—how can you reconcile them to your artistic conscience?"

"Easily enough. I forget the setting of my ring, and think only of the opal. How beautiful it is, and how mysterious! The living light in it and in the diamonds have burned there long before the Pharaohs' days. They say an opal——" She stops, confusedly.

"What do they say? That it is 'unlucky'?"

"Some folly of that kind. I don't believe it; I am not superstitious about such things."

"Of course not; and I did not give it to you until after our marriage, remember, if ever you feel inclined to become superstitious. It is to betrothed lovers that the opal is of evil portent."

"Where did you buy this ring, Sir Hugh?"

"I did not buy it. I should have told you the story of that ring, my darling, when I gave it you, only that I was bound to wait awhile. The conditions are fulfilled, and I will tell it to you now."

He places himself on the deck at her feet, leaning on his right elbow, draws her arm round his neck, holding her fingers, which hang over his shoulder, in his left hand, and speaks with his frank face upturned to hers.

"Five years ago, long before I had ever seen you, I met, in Paris, a Neapolitan lady. She was a beautiful woman still, though no longer young, of a fierce, passionate nature, uneducated, imperious, and with the air of one who had suffered from some bitter oppression in the past, and could live only in wild and incessant excitement in the present. The name I knew her by I need not repeat; I am sure it was not her own. I met her in society which I did not often frequent, and which I should have done better to have avoided altogether; but there was not a guardian angel in my life then, Ianthe. I have never seen in man or woman such a rage for gambling as that which possessed this woman. I have known her to lose and win and lose again, within a few hours, a sum which even a Russian would hold to be a fortune. Her wealth seemed to be as inexhaustible as her extravagance and her caprices. Her furs, her laces, and her jewels were the envy of—well, of the demi-monde, at least, and, I daresay, of the greater ladies. She was not vain; her passions were too eager and too large for the smaller vices; and the homage which men paid to her exceeding, but repellant, beauty by their admiration, and women by their detraction, wearied her. I never heard the boldest, the most mendacious, of the men who surrounded her, boast of having received the slightest encouragement in a love suit from her; and I once heard her speak of love with shuddering abhorrence, in which I am convinced that she was sincere. This was on the first occasion of my meeting her, at a noisy supper after a 'première' of one of Sardou's plays. The play was of the fierce order, and it

pleased her. She declared it was so natural—the perfidy, the hatred, and the revenge in it! But the love! That, except as the source of the others, was contemptible, unworthy of the attention and the patience of rational creatures.”

“What a horrible mind! How she must have shocked you!”

Sir Hugh smiles.

“Not so much as you think, my white lily. I had heard this sort of thing talked before, and I have heard it talked since, though not with the fire and the fervency of her speech—without attaching much importance to it. I met her again; she interested though she did not please me. People talked about her, and set absurd stories afloat respecting the origin of her wealth: one of them had it that she was a political spy. I watched her reckless gambling with amazement. Ianthe, the strange, impetuous woman—whose beauty had never turned my head for an instant, whose character, if character such impulses and excesses could be called, was eminently antipathetic to me—fell violently in love with me. She did, indeed—giving her own theories the strongest possible contradiction in her own person. You blush, Ianthe, and you frown. You blush for her; but you need not frown at me. I was not left long in ignorance of her feelings, and I had the hardest task to perform, which can be set a gentleman—to reject a woman’s love.”

“How did she bear it?”

“In a manner which amazed me. I expected a whirlwind of reproach and fury, but she was calm and dignified. She asked me only one question: Did I love another? I told her—no. We met once again, at her request, and she then gave me the opal ring. ‘You will not refuse me this one parting prayer,’ she said, ‘for you and I shall meet no more. Keep this jewel safely until you love some fair woman, pure, and loving, and noble, and have made her your wife. Give her the ring as a bridal gift, but until your happiness is secure—until the newness of love has grown into such firm trust that you can tell your wife the story of my mistake without a misgiving do not tell her that story. Let her wear the jewel always, it will be a trophy the more for her, an additional tribute to the charms which shall have won the prize I tried for in vain. Promise me this, Sir Hugh Trevor,’ she added. I promised. She rose, said quietly as she

placed the ring in my hands, ‘Keep your word, with your English honour, and I shall have nothing more to desire,’ and instantly left the room. I never saw her since.”

Lady Trevor’s face is very grave, as she asks him:—

“Do you think her goodwill was sincere? It seems a wild and romantic kind of generosity.”

“All her impulses were wild and romantic; but while they lasted, they were sincere. The time she anticipated has come; our happiness is secure, and now I have told you the story. Henceforth you’ll always wear the ring, Ianthe, will you not? She was right, you know—it is a trophy the more.”

She smiles, not quite naturally, and rises, says she must go below to write her letters; and so leaves him. I see her enter the long low cabin, where a female attendant awaits her; and her first action is to take the opal ring from her finger, and place it in a jewel box; I follow the opal to its dark resting-place, and then I see no more.

A many-coloured crowd is thronging into an open space in Cairo. It pours through the ancient gateways, it comes from the plains beyond, it surges around the walls of a citadel, whose gate, of the quaint picturesque architecture of Egypt, is richly hung with gorgeous draperies which are grouped under a golden crescent; and flanked by the standard of the Prophet. The open space affords a long vista of mosques and palm patches, and one huge building throws a gigantic shadow over the immense square, where soldiers are drawn up on guard. Strong excitement prevails among the multitude, which is formed of men of many nations in all varieties of costume, from the most gorgeous habilaments of the east, to the plain dress of travelling Englishmen, with white scarfs twisted round their straw hats, which look out of place beside the turbans and the tarbouches. The crowd consists mostly of men on foot, but there are also throngs of women—in the invariable blue Egyptian robe, with strings of jewels and coins hanging about them—and they are wild with excitement and waiting. Long trains of handsome Cairene asses, caparisoned in many colours, and mostly ridden by foreigners, push through the surging multitude. Wild harsh music accompanies and accentuates the ceaseless tumult of

human voices, the braying of asses, and the guttural grunting of the lumbering, bedecked camels, plodding their heavy way among the masses. A roar of guns comes from the citadel, and a man's voice says in English—

"The procession has started from the Gate of Victory."

It is Sir Hugh Trevor who speaks, to Ianthe. They have taken up a position in the great square, in front of the citadel, and are surrounded by a strong escort. Mustafa is there; and the Nubian, in his snowy garments, with a golden girdle, holds one of the crimson tassels which depends from the head gear of the fine dromedary—an animal of pure race and great price—on which Ianthe is seated. The cumbrous saddle is covered with a rich crimson cloth; over which the folds of a white and gold burnoos fall; the golden lines glitter in the sun. Ianthe's face is almost hidden beneath the hood of her burnoos, drawn forward over the dusky plaits of her hair, but there is a flush of interest and excitement on her cheek, and her deep blue eyes scan the crowd eagerly. As she sits upon the dromedary in all security, her hands lie crossed in her lap, and now I know why I see her again. She wears the opal ring. Close to the footboard stands Sir Hugh, a little in advance of the foremost line of spectators, for the dromedary is placed sideways, and his rider faces the gate of the citadel. The great procession will defile close to them.

It comes. A long line of soldiery, of all arms, infantry, cavalry, and artillery—wonderfully barbaric even with their discipline upon them—pass, amid the cries of the multitude and the salutes of the guns, preceding the Viceroy's carriages, magnificent in feathers and gilding. A moment more and the vast multitude burst into howls of ecstasy as two wretched madmen rush by, executing hideous gambols. The crowd is restrained by a squadron of gorgeously attired horsemen, mounted on fiery, yet docile, Arab steeds, for presently there is a desperate rush of fanatics to throw themselves under the feet of the white dromedary, draped in cloth of gold, which now advances, bearing under an enormous canopy of green silk, glittering with jewels and gold, the Sacred Carpet. The dazzling, barbaric spectacle passes, with its escort of half naked musicians, performing deafening noises, and mounted on beautiful dromedaries,

painted in henna, and draped in coloured stuffs. Amid a tremendous clang of trumpets, clash of cymbals, and roll of drums, the white dromedary halts in the middle of the square, and the procession of the pilgrims, headed by their hideous Santon, commences. Ianthe turns pale and shrinks as the horrible fanatic is openly adored by the frantic multitude, and the women kiss and fondle his dromedary—an infinitely nobler creature than he. Her relief is evident when the religious orgy is over, and the long train of rich pilgrims, with laden camels, and every provision for the comfort of the journey, defiles before her. There is but little talk between her and Sir Hugh as he stands in the same place beside her, through the long hours; they are absorbed in seeing, and hardly notice that some members of their own escort have thrown themselves into the crowd of fanatics and rapturously worshipped the hideous wretch who heads the pilgrim train. When the poor pilgrims—some wearing the green turban which tells that they have performed the terrible task already, have seen Mecca and the Kaaba—come plodding by, on the first march of that journey on foot which must mean death to so many, tears glitter in her eyes, her voice trembles as she speaks to Sir Hugh. She points with one outstretched hand to an aged man with bent shoulders and feet that falter already; and on that hand the opal flashes in the burning sun, well-nigh intolerable now.

"Oh, Hugh, look at him; look at his fixed, abstracted gaze. He is mad, and so old and poor! He will drop down in the sand and die!"

"Probably," says Sir Hugh; "but he will die happy!"

The crowd has pressed around them with an equal pressure all this time, and has had little attention to spare for the compact party in the first line. With an exception: one man watches Ianthe with unwavering intentness, not to be distracted by anything, after the sacred dromedary with its sacred burden has passed by. The man is of the lowest class; he wears the common blue garments of the ass-drivers and the water-carriers, and his neck and breast are bare. In his sullen face there is not the fanatic glare I see on countless faces around, but there is something frightful in the avidity of the gaze he fixes on Ianthe. It follows her every movement; when she points with

the ringed hand, his eyes pursue the gesture. When the procession has passed by, when the vast multitude begins to disperse, and Ianthe's dromedary, with its escort, are put in motion, this man follows the party unobserved. I learn, by the conversation between Sir Hugh Trevor and the dragoman, that they are not going on board the dabéyah at once, that they are going to remain at Cairo until their "caravan" has been organised, and that Mustafa is immediately to devote himself to the hiring of asses and drivers. The Nubian and Mustafa only are to accompany Sir Hugh and Lady Trevor to the Pyramids, the rest of their retinue are to remain with the boat. Ianthe and her husband enter the hotel, where Europeans of many nations congregate, and then I see no more, for Ianthe goes to the bath, and the ring is laid aside.

Again it is morning in the east. But I see no yellow river, and no crowding craft. A vast unequal plain stretches away to the horizon, a plain of sand and stones, with tracts and spots of roseate colour diversifying its grey dulness; a plain on which sand-heaps accumulate, shift, and change, telling everywhere of ruin and of burial; a plain with but one green glimpse throughout the wide expanse of its sandy desolation. It is formed by a great sycamore which stands alone in the sand, and three tall palms ranged in the rear of it. A camp is formed beneath and around the spreading branches of the beneficent desert trees. One large tent, two smaller ones, and a group of animals, one of them Ianthe's dromedary, occupy the blessed shade. All the customary features of a camp are there in their inimitable picturesqueness, and, at the entrance of the large tent stands Ianthe. The camels, the asses, and the drivers are all feeding after their various kind and fashion. The activity of the day has not begun.

Beyond the little camp lie several sand-hills, and beyond them rises the colossal head in the sand, the ancient Sphinx, the sleepless advanced guard of the three great Pyramids of Gizeh. Ianthe can see its calm face, from where she stands, though at a considerable distance; the face "with a smile of beatitude, just dashed with irony." Presently a man, one of the ass drivers from among the group under the trees, comes round the tent, and addresses her in an obsequious

manner. She answers him carelessly, and he retires to speak with Mustafa. Sir Hugh Trevor comes out of the tent and joins Ianthe.

"To the left, below that little patch of stones, I will have the tent pitched to-day," she says; "I have completed the profile of the Sphinx on the desert side, perfectly. How delicious it is here, Hugh."

"It certainly is, but I am getting tired of it. It is all very well if one is going into the desert in earnest, but I begin to want to get back to the 'Lady.'"

"Then we will return to-morrow. I only ask for this one day. My portfolio is full; and I, too, long for the boat and the river again, and the moving panorama. You might tell them to saddle the donkeys now."

"When you are installed, I shall take Mustafa and the guns, and try for some birds. The Arabs have been telling me about a brackish pool, where there are some, a few miles from here. I shall get back, I daresay, before you're tired."

In a short time all is ready for the start. A handsome Cairene ass is laden with the light canvas tent, the easel, the folding-stool, and the implements which form Ianthe's equipment, and a second is saddled for her own use. Sir Hugh carefully places her in her saddle, and she takes the bridle in her hand. She wears a plain white dress, and a brown Arab burnoos, the hood drawn over her face. As she lifts the bridle I see the opal ring on her left hand, and I take note of the intent gaze which the man, who is ready to attend her, fixes, not upon her, but upon the jewel. He is the same man who followed her after the festival of the departure of the Holy Carpet; the same sullen, slinking, debased looking man. He has contrived to get himself hired by Sir Hugh Trevor's dragoman, and is apparently a selected attendant upon Ianthe. I understand why, when I see the large, sleek, well-cared-for beasts, which are his especial charge. Sir Hugh mounts a third ass, and the little cortège starts for the appointed spot, with Yusuf, the ass-driver, and Ali, the Nubian, in attendance. They halt at the back of a sand-hill, near the Sphinx, which shuts out the camp from sight, leaving only the tops of the trees to be discerned; and is only a few hundreds of yards away from the great Pyramid. The little tent is quickly set up, the easel prepared, and Ianthe ready to set to work upon the drawing which is to

complete her collection. On the way Sir Hugh and Ianthe have talked, as lovers talk, of the eternal recollections which they shall carry away from Gizeh; and, somewhat sadly, as the theme suggests, of the desolation and the oblivion of countless multitudes of the human race, to be read in the scene around them. The faces of the two are solemn, when, after he has seen her, as he said, "installed," Sir Hugh takes leave of Ianthe. The eternal face of the Sphinx, reared above the shifting ocean of sand, seems to awe them. Absolute silence is around them. Yusuf and his donkeys are moving slowly away, towards the other side of the sand-hill, where they will rest in a scooped-out hollow, and Ali has withdrawn to the back of the tent, where he lies, face downwards, on his folded arms, perfectly content.

"When the shifting of the desert face becomes irksome, it rests one to look at the stillness of the Sphinx," says Sir Hugh, as he and Ianthe stand in front of the mighty watcher, hand-in-hand.

"Yes; what a multitude of dead it guards, with all their secrets."

"The ancient face has never seemed to me so mysterious and so beautiful."

Sir Hugh kisses Ianthe, and they part. Sir Hugh takes one of the donkeys and rides away alone, leaving Yusuf peacefully slumbering between the other two, with a few dates and a leathern bottle filled with water for his sustenance during the sultry day.

Ianthe has been at work two hours, and the stillness around is all unbroken. No caravan is within sight; the Pyramids, so often the scene of a vulgar-enough bustle, are as solitary as their ancient dead. Ali has strolled a little way from the tent, but not beyond his mistress' sight, or the range of her voice. Yusuf, the ass driver, hidden from the observation of both by the shoulder of the sand-hill, is engaged in a strange employment. He is apparently deepening the floor of the scooped-out hollow where his asses lie, with their noses to the sand. He has wrenched a shovel-shaped iron stirrup off one of the saddles, and is digging in the sand with it with frantic haste, flinging the shovelfuls behind him so that they form a little hillock which soon hides his spare bending frame. At length, his work is done, and he pauses to contemplate it. I hear him speak:—

"Deep enough, and wide enough. And now, to find him, the good Ali, the faithful Ali; no fear of his coming to see what I was

doing; he would not stir so far from her side. 'With Ali she could never be afraid.' It is a big price for the jewel, but it must be paid, and the first proof I shall have of the luck it will bring me will be the safety and success of this deed. My father was a wise man, and he told me there could come no luck to him who did not possess a jewel of the kind sacred to the month of his birth. I was born in the month of the opal, and all my life I have had no luck because I never could buy or lay hold of an opal. When the jewel flashed on this woman's hand, even as she turned with her insolent Christian disgust from the holy Santon, favourite of Allah, the Prophet sent me the inspiration. I knew it should be mine; I knew that my luck had come. The opal will bring it; I have waited for it for many years. Next year I shall make the haj, and win the highest paradise. It would have been vain to have started without my luck."

Yusuf speaks dreamily, wagging his head from side to side; and in his sullen, wizened face there is a half-crazy look, as of one who is part fool, part fanatic, but completely a base and unscrupulous ruffian. He feels in his girdle for a moment, gives a silent nod of satisfaction, glides round the shoulder of the sand-hill which hides Ianthe's tent from him, and steals to the back of the tent. There he lays himself flat on the ground, and wriggling up to the canvas rim like a serpent, he gently lifts the edge of it, and peeps in. Ianthe is seated before her easel, absorbed in her painting. The counterfeit presentment of the Ancient Watcher in the desert is growing under her hand; her head is bent forward in a pause of contemplation of her work. Her left hand, holding her palette, hangs by her side, and on it glitters the opal ring. There is a fiendish beauty in the jewel, in its streaks of vivid green, of faint violet and yellow, and in the tongue of flame that leaps up in the heart of it. The glance of the grovelling hidden spy passes beyond the figure of Ianthe, through the doorway of the tent, in search of Ali. The faithful Nubian does not lie, as Yusuf expects, in the doorway; he is at some distance from the tent, and, to see him, Ianthe would have to rise and hold back the curtains. Yusuf, having satisfied himself on all points of his enquiry, softly drops the canvas rim, and glides away from the tent as noiselessly as he approached it. He nears Ali, by a wide circuit, and comes up with the Nubian as he lies in his favourite

attitude, face downwards; his head and neck sheltered by the thick folds of his snowy turban, and the hilt of his yataghan showing at his side, where it protrudes from his girdle. For all his lazy attitude, the Nubian is not sleeping; he starts to his feet as Yusuf approaches, and utters a gruff kind of recognition.

"The day wears," says Yusuf. "Think-est thou we shall soon return to the camp? One of my beasts is sick. I think it has eaten of some poisonous weed. It is ill luck, for it is the handsomest and the strongest of them, even the ass which the lady rides. Thou art somewhat of a leech: wilt thou come and look at the poor beast?"

Ali scans the surrounding plain. There is not a human being near. He can discern some indistinct forms in the neighbourhood of the second pyramid, but they are too far off to suggest the reasonable idea of possible harm to his mistress. The inconvenience of a sick beast of burthen may be considerable; he will go and look at the animal, though it involve his losing sight of the tent for a few minutes. So he signifies an ungracious assent, and the two men strike across the sand plain away from the tent, and turn the shoulder of the sand-hill. They exchange but few words until they are close upon the asses, whose bridles are tied together. Then Ali says,

"Which is the beast that aileth? I see nothing amiss with either of them."

"It is that one," Yusuf answers, drawing near to Ali, and stretching out his hand as though to indicate the animal, so that it is on a line with Ali's shoulder. There is a keen-edged dagger in the hand, and in an instant it is plunged into Ali's back, below the shoulder-blade, piercing the heart from behind, with an aim so fell and true, that Ali drops down upon his face upon the sand, stone dead, with no more utterance than a deep sob, half groan, half cry. Quick as thought the murderer snatches the turban from the dead man's head, and drags the limp body over the few yards of sand between the spot where he stands and the hole which is to be its grave. In those few seconds the white garments of the corpse are soaked in blood, and as Yusuf drags it past the animals, they struggle up, snorting and terrified. He pushes the body into the hole, and thinly covers it with sand, all with frantic haste and a vehement trembling of his frame, caused, not by remorse or fear,

but by fierce frantic excitement. When this is done he snatches up the dead man's turban, and stands for a moment, drawing the ends of the strong white cloth evenly together. Now he grasps the centre with both hands, and makes a quick turn outwards with them. "I have not forgotten it," he mutters, as he turns them in again, making the knuckles of each meet; and once more goes in the direction of Ianthe's tent.

The sun is high and fierce now; his rays strike the distant Pyramids, and the crouching Sphinx, and the many-coloured sands, with a burning, shimmering light, and the air is full of vibrating radiance. Ianthe has left her seat in front of her easel, and is in the act of pouring water from a gourd into a silver cup which hangs by a silver chain from her girdle, when the darkening of the doorway of the tent causes her to turn half round. She has not time to recognise Yusuf, or to utter a sound, before he springs upon her with a bound like a tiger's, and bears her irresistibly to the earth. As she falls violently, face downwards, the turban of her faithful servant does its deadly work in the hands of her murderer. He slips the thick folds round her neck, twists his hands behind her head, and chokes her with a dexterous rapidity worthy of a Thug.

Then Yusuf, leaving the twisted cloth as it is, pulls the corpse, without so much as a glance at the face, so beautiful a few seconds before, into a sitting position, and propping it up between the bench and the easel, strips it of its few ornaments. They consist of the silver cup and chain, a locket with a miniature likeness of Sir Hugh—on which the pious Mussulman spits, notwithstanding his fierce haste—and the opal ring.

"My luck, my luck," he murmurs, "at last," as he lifts the heavy, swollen, purple hand, distorted in the death pang, and tries to pull the ring off the crooked finger. What a splendid jewel it is that flashes within the circle of diamonds, with its green and violet gleams, and the red flame at its heart, with all the good fortune of a lifetime for Yusuf imprisoned in it too! But the purple flesh swells up above and below it, and the ring will not come off. So Yusuf hacks at the finger with his knife, and when he has severed it from the hand, thrusts it, with the weapon, into his pouch; and, after one cautious look round from the door—

way of the tent, steals out exultant. Ali is still; the dim figures in the distance come no nearer, and, save for the little group under the shadow of the sand-hill, there is not a sign of life in the plains of Gizeh.

I follow the man in whose possession is the ring. He returns to the shelter where the asses are, where Ali's sand-grave is, and muttering fiercely with a horrible satisfaction all the time, he again scrapes away the sand for about the space of a foot above the breast of the corpse, and casts into the hole the severed finger of his second victim, the locket, and the silver cup and chain. He will keep no meaner gems than the one object of his desire, to risk detection through them: not for these has he thus dared. No, they shall lie in the desert with Ali the Nubian, who will be the accused one, whose turban will be found, the instrument of the crime, and who will be sought for vainly far and wide, while Yusuf goes unsuspected under the charm of his "luck." He piles the sand high upon the Nubian's grave; he replaces the stirrup on its leather, and fastens the leather to the gaily bedight saddle on which lanthe rode that morning. When he has carefully inspected his coarse blue garments, and satisfied himself that they are free from any trace of blood, he has one more task to do. He carefully rips, with lean dexterous fingers, the lining of the pad strapped on the back of the ass which carried the tent and its furniture. It is of rude structure, stuffed with tow and raw cotton. In its recesses he hides the opal ring, after a long and rapturous gaze upon its mysterious lustre. Then he sews up the lining of the pad with a thin leather thong, and straps it on the back of the docile beast, which rubs its fine black muzzle fondly against its master's arm; and, obedient to his word of command, lies down in the sand on the far side of its companion. Besides his turban, Yusuf has robbed the Nubian's body of one object only. It is a little pouch of plaited straw, containing two squares of a greenish paste; an opiate drug which Ali was much given to use, but rarely shared with any of his comrades. "When they find her," muttered Yusuf, as he empties the contents of the bag into his hand, and flings the little pouch out on the plain as far as his arm can direct it, "they will come this way, and they will find me in the third heaven, thanks to Ali's rare hachich. - By the prophet, they will praise

the cunning and the wisdom of Ali, who sent Yusuf thither, while he had such business to do." He stretches himself in the sand, his feet within a couple of yards of his victim's grave, his shoulders supported by the side of the ass, his head resting upon the pad, just above its hidden wealth, the opal, with its gleams of green and violet, and the red flame at its heart. Then he swallows the drug.

I see no more.

The secret of Ali the Nubian is in the keeping of the Sphinx.

THE THIRD ENTRY IN GEORGE HADDON'S NOTE-BOOK.

"CAN you see?"

"I can see."

She touched her eyes lightly with her finger-tips, as though they pained her, and the mesmerist observed her anxiously.

"Does it hurt or weary you to see?"

"Yes; I am tired."

"Can you follow the fortunes of the opal otherwise than by sight?"

"I can read anything that has been written concerning it."

"Has anything been written? I touch your eyes with the ring, and bid you search."

He held the ring pressed upon her eyes for several minutes while she kept silence. At length she removed his hand and spoke:—

There is a castle in the north of England, in a country of hills and streams, which stands far from any great neighbours, with only a village near. In that castle lives a lady, quite alone. She has white hair, and a proud, sorrowful face—not deeply marked by years as yet, but full of care. She rarely goes out except when on errands of friendly kindness among the villagers, and she has little communication with the outer world. A silent grandeur pervades the castle; an indefinable air of waiting is perceptible in the lady's face, and in her gentle, lingering ways, and even perceptible also in the manners and the talk of the servants. These are quiet times, but there shall be great doings when Mr. Drelin-court comes home. Many stalls stand empty in the stables now, but they shall be occupied by tidy bits of horseflesh, when Mr. Drelin-court comes home. The great drawing-room—a noble apartment,

with mirrors and chandeliers which were the talk of the country when the last bride (that pale, white-haired lady with the waiting looks) was brought home, is covered up with brown holland, and yellow canvas-muslin, and never entered save by the housemaids. It shall shine gloriously and be filled with a gorgeous company when Mr. Drelincourt comes home! He has been away for a long time, and nobody knows why—nobody, that is, except his mother, who, if there be a secret in the matter, keeps it.

There is a portrait of Mr. Drelincourt in the library; it is fitted into the panelling of the wall above the writing-table which his mother uses. She passes the greater part of her time in that spacious, somewhat solemn room, where the shadows gather in the evening about walls lined with books in many languages, and which represent a large proportion of all literature. Mr. Drelincourt is a handsome man, if his portrait tell the truth—a brave, bright young Englishman, of upright, stalwart frame, and a face which unites frankness and gallantry of expression to beauty of feature. Bright, fearless, happy eyes, dark blue in colour, look out from the canvas from beneath a broad forehead, crowned with dark, thick, short curls; and the smile on the lips and in the eyes is the smile of a man who is true, and tender, and bold. A son for any mother in the world to be proud of is Mr. Drelincourt, if his portrait tell truth.

In the spaciousness of the library, a circle of dusk surrounds the centre of light formed by the wide hearth with its blazing logs, the old marble mantelpiece whereon tall wax-lights burn, the table with its shaded reading-lamps, and the great velvet chair in which the lonely lady of the castle is half hidden. It is Christmas-tide, and there is stir out of doors; but the customary silence of Lynne Castle is untroubled by the seasonable liveliness. The merriment and good cheer which are permitted to the undiminished retinue of servants, with so little to do, come not nigh their mistress. She is passing her Christmas Eve with her son's portrait and her son's letters from the foreign lands whither he has resorted, for all her company. For what? On the writing-table there lies a miniature, open; it is the likeness of a young girl. She has a fair face, with golden hair closely braided in a classic fashion, deep brown eyes, and a complexion of a warm tint, such as seldom goes

with the fairness of Northern women, but is a beauty proper to the South. A bundle of letters lies beside the miniature, and on Mrs. Drelincourt's lap is a manuscript which she has been reading this Christmas Eve. She has concluded its perusal now, and lies back in her chair, with her eyes raised to the portrait of her son; in her face there is hope—on her mutely moving lips there are prayers.

The speaker paused, and sighed deeply. The mesmerist besought my silence by an expressive glance. After some minutes he again spoke:

"Can you read that manuscript?"

"Yes."

"Do so, then."

She read:—

I obey you, my dear mother; I record for you the story of my love. I make that clear to you which has hitherto been vague, because I could not yet bear to look into its depths of misery myself. Time, and such submission as I could bring my rebellious heart to, have availed; I can tell you all now; I can even contemplate returning to the old scenes, though never to the old light-heartedness with which I once moved amid them. It is fitting that you should know all before we meet; and so I write the story of my stay in Venice.

It links itself by a strong association with my sojourn in the East; for it was at Alexandria that I met Paolo D'Oria, of whom you have already heard. He was on his way home, after a visit to the Holy Land, and we met at the house of the Italian Consul. He had pleasant manners, the brightness and courtesy of his nation, and tastes which harmonised with mine. We struck up something more than acquaintance on our first meeting, we agreed to visit the bazaar in company on the following day, for a common purpose—to buy souvenirs for friends at home. In the course of our proceedings we found our way to the jewellers' quarter, and there we passed some time, looking at many beautiful things which we could not buy; and I discovered that my companion was learned in gems. In a dark, mean little shop, where the merchant might have been the original of any of the people in the Arabian Nights, we saw some good turquoises and several fine strings of amber. D'Oria and I had selected some specimens of each when the jewel merchant directed our attention to an opal ring of

extreme beauty. The jewel filled Paolo D'Oria with admiration; he declared it to be the finest of its size that he had ever seen, and a dead bargain at the price asked for it. The setting, in diamonds, was European—French, D'Oria said; and we wondered how the ring had found its way to the shop in Alexandria, where there was no other article of European workmanship. My dragoman enquired of the jewel merchant, and was told that there was a strange-enough story attached to the ring. In the preceding year, when the pilgrims were returning from Mecca, one among the poorest of them (a man named Yusuf) who fell sick by the wayside not far from Cairo, and was tended by a brother pilgrim, who lingered with him when he could go no farther, and gave him, of his scanty provision, food and water. The hadji died, having, just before he expired, revealed to his friend that he was the possessor of unsuspected wealth. It consisted of an opal ring, which the wretched man had secreted on his person while its price would have made him rich, and though privation and hardship were the causes of his mortal illness. The hadji had neither wife nor child; a solitary dying creature, save for his friend, to whom he answered when he asked him why he had not sold the jewel, that he could not—he was born in the month of the opal, and it was his "luck." But he bade his friend take it when he should be dead, and do with it as he pleased. The man sold the ring to our jewel merchant. The story interested Paolo d'Oria.

"October is the month of the opal," he said. "My sister Beatrice was born in October; she ought to wear the jewel of her natal month. I will buy the ring."

But when he came to bargain with the jewel merchant, he found that the price set upon the ring was too high.

"I am not rich enough," he said, with an easy, frank smile. "Beatrice must go without her amulet, or wear a humbler one." Then seeing, in his quick, Italian way, that I wished to buy the ring, but was restrained by a doubt of the good taste of doing so, he said, "Pray buy it, Mr. Dreincourt; don't let us both lose it. It is really a splendid specimen, and the story of it is worth remembering for its illustration of the folly and fanaticism of these people of the East."

I bought the opal ring, and he chose some

less costly gifts for his mother and his sister. We saw a good deal of each other during the remainder of my stay; and when I left by the P. and O. steamer for Malta, D'Oria and I parted with an understanding that when my roving commission should take me to Venice, I would let him know of my arrival. You know all about the intervening six months. I pass on to the time when I redeemed my promise; I pass on to the time which has set its mark upon my life.

It was not until I had been more than a week in Venice that I left my card, with the address of my hotel upon it, at the Palazzo D'Oria. The wonderful dream-like enchantment of the City of the Sea, its "insupportable glory," and the "unsubstantial magic" of it, took such possession of me, that I could not have endured companionship. I felt I must be alone until "the new sensation, new memory, and new mind," which are the gifts of Venice to those who come to her with eyes to see and soul to feel her beauty, had become a less strange and overwhelming experience. When at length I saw Paolo, I found him even a pleasanter companion than before, for he, unlike most of his fellows, was versed in the history of Venice, proud of her ancient renown, and enamoured of her deathless beauty. After a whole day passed together, we went in the evening to the Palazzo D'Oria, where I was received by the marchese (his father) and the marchesa (his mother) with much distinction as Paolo's friend. These excellent people regarded their son's tastes with no little wonder, and without any sympathy; but they were proud of him. That night, the vision of the Queen of the Adriatic faded from my brain, the spell of Venus was loosened from my heart, superseded by a fairer vision, by a more potent spell. Look upon the picture which will reach you with this, and you will see a faint presentment indeed of Beatrice D'Oria, but something like the girl's face that beamed upon me in the old Venetian palace. The eyes and the mouth are like, but where is the light of the eyes, where is the sweet flashing smile dispersing the pensiveness of the mouth into the sweetest gaiety? I need not describe her further—indeed, I could not, though I can never forget the soft graciousness, the noble modesty of her manner to her brother's friend, her girlish interest in our talk of our travels, and her arch detection of us when we told her "travellers' tales."

Late in the evening the marchesa received a few visitors, among them a gentleman of middle-age, who reminded me, in complexion, in expression, in all but costume, of one of Titian's portraits. Il Conte Alberto dei Cerutti was, I learned, a Milanese of ancient family and good fortune—for an Italian. No doubt he had been eminently handsome in his youth, but cold, crafty lines about his brow and his mouth which must have been there even then, and in his black eyes there was a sleepy fierceness peculiarly repulsive to me. He mingled easily with the general company, and, though I observed that he was on terms of intimacy with the marchese and marchesa, I never saw him approach Beatrice after his first formal greeting, nor did he, while I remained in the saloon, join in the conversation which Paolo and I carried on with her. I remember little that passed, nor does it matter. The Carnival was drawing near, and both Paolo and Beatrice were full of its anticipated delights. It was to be a very good Carnival, the nobility intended to join in all its enjoyments, and the ancient fame of the Venetian fancy balls was to be revived by great entertainments to be given by official personages, and by many of the leaders of private society, Venetian and foreign. I should have cards for the balls, Paolo said; and he and I must plan our costumes together. I thought his beautiful sister looked pleased when he said this; I thought the animation of her manner increased. There was special mention of a ball to be given by a Polish princess, who owned one of the finest of the old palaces, and lived in a style of great magnificence at Venice for a portion of each year.

"I shall wear my turquoises and my amber beads at Princess Levinsky's," said Beatrice. (She and her brother spoke French with me.) "They will go well with my Romaic costume, and I have never worn them yet."

"You remember the things she is speaking of," said Paolo, "and about the famous opal. Have you the ring?"

"I have it here; but I have never worn it. It is too showy for a man's ring."

"What is it, an opal? The most beautiful of all jewels!" said Beatrice. Then we told her the story of our purchases at Alexandria, and she declared that I must positively wear the ring, in some fashion, in my Carnival costume. I had fallen in love with Beatrice D'Oria before

I took leave of her that night. She realised my ideal of beauty and of charm.

I pass over the ensuing days. They were full of intoxicating pleasure to me—pleasure in the beautiful city, in the strange water-streets, in the gorgeous sunsets, in the wondrous atmosphere of poetry and romance, in the companionship of Paolo D'Oria (who was as good as his word about providing for my Carnival diversions), but, above all, in the love which grew daily, and to which I gave myself up utterly. I knew nothing of Italian social life, I never looked below the surface; I only knew that with the sanction of her parents and her brother, I passed several hours of every day in the society of Beatrice D'Oria; and that, though I was not a moment alone with her, I was not prevented, either overtly or covertly, from talking with her in a language which neither her parents nor their guests understood. With one exception—Count Alberto dei Cerutti, spoke French; but he disliked the exercise of that accomplishment, Paolo told me, and avoided it. To me he rarely spoke at all, though we met every evening. But Count Alberto did not share the general propensity of his countrymen for late hours, and when Paolo and I arrived at the Palazzo d'Oria, we frequently found his gondola in waiting, and met the count himself coming down the wide marble steps overhung by the balcony where Beatrice loved to sit late into the night. On these occasions the count and Paolo would exchange a familiar greeting, but with me Count Alberto never went beyond a grave and formal bow.

One Sunday morning, a week before the beginning of the Carnival, I was enjoying the spectacle of which I never wearied—the piazza of St. Mark, and the picturesque groups who traversed it and entered the wonderful church which neither pen nor pencil has ever portrayed, or ever can portray. The people came and went through the ever-open doorways, and as I watched them I caught sight of Beatrice D'Oria, who was leaving the church, attended only by a woman servant. I advanced and saluted her; and in the quick flush which suffused her beautiful face I read more than the embarrassment of a sudden meeting under unusual circumstances. I was not so ignorant of Italian manners as to venture on detaining her long, but the few minutes of our incoherent talk were priceless. Beatrice loved me; might I not hope that her parents would look favourably on

my suit? I would make it known to them after the formalist fashion of their own manners when I should have learned from Paolo what that fashion was; as soon as possible after I should have received from her the farther assurance which I must contrive to procure.

For the first time since my arrival at Venice, I did not see Paolo that day. We missed each other by a series of accidents. When I arrived in the evening at the Palazzo D'Orta, my gondola was detained while one just ahead discharged its load at the marble steps. Two persons landed from it: Paolo and Count Alberto. I had never seen them together before, and I experienced an unaccountable sensation of discomfort at the sight. It was not simply fear, or suspicion, or foreboding; but a mingling of the three. They ascended the steps, and entered the vestibule. I followed quickly, and reached the saloon a few moments later than they. The marchesa, Paolo, and the count were its sole occupants; and all three were visibly discomposed by my entrance. The marchesa received me coldly, the count made me his usual grave and formal bow, and Paolo, after an expression of surprise and regret at the clever manner in which we had contrived to miss each other all day—I easily discerned that the surprise was affected, and the regret unreal—glanced uneasily at the count, and said no more. The Count Alberto came to my aid. He asked the question I did not dare to ask; he enquired for Beatrice.

"She is indisposed, and keeps her room," was the answer; and, as she made it, the marchesa in her turn glanced uneasily at the count. Then came another pause, happily broken by the arrival of the customary visitors. After a few moments of very painful indecision, I resolved upon my course of action. I mingled with the other people, aired my bad Italian in a brief dialogue with the marchesa, observing Paolo all the time, and when he left the room—again, to my surprise and annoyance, with the count—I followed them, and overtaking them on the steps, told Paolo I wished to speak with him.

"To-night?" asked Paolo.

"To-night. Now, and here, if you are not going away with the count. If you are—later—anywhere you please."

Again Paolo cast an uneasy glance at the count, who stood aside with an ostentatious air of politely suffering an interruption, but the tone of Paolo's voice as he answered me was kind and cordial.

"I shall be back in five minutes. Wait for me in the balcony."

They passed on; I re-entered the saloon, unobserved, and went into the balcony. A shawl of striped crimson and black hung over its stone front, where Beatrice was wont to rest her fair arms, while she watched the lights glimmering in the canal, and the flitting of the silent gondolas.

Within the promised time Paolo joined me. I leaned upon the balcony, out of hearing of the people in the saloon, and came to the point with him at once.

"You are avoiding me," I said; "something has come between us. You are too true a gentleman to deny it, or equivocate in word or deed. Is the reason because you have discovered that I love your sister?"

"I have discovered that," he answered, not angrily, or offensively, but sadly; "or rather, I have been told it."

"By Cerutti?"

"Oh, my poor fellow!" Paolo went on in the impulsive way which was natural to him, and laid his hand on my shoulder, "you Englishmen are so much in earnest; you take things so much to heart! Beatrice has been betrothed to Cerutti these three years, and they are to be married after Easter!"

Paolo came with me to my hotel; he stayed with me until the night was far spent; he was kind, compassionate, reasonable, and inexorable. He admitted at once that he as well as Count Alberto was aware that I had won the heart of the beautiful, innocent girl, who had never had a glimpse of a possible love in her life before, but had been the unresisting victim of a bargain whose terms she did not understand. She had come to know them now, and she might wish—did wish, no doubt—to break the bargain; that, however, could not be. The family honour was pledged to the maintenance of the contract, and it must be maintained. He excused me for urging the possibility of my own suit being entertained, in consideration of my ignorance of Italian social customs and family government; but he would not enter upon the question of the probable feelings of Beatrice, or consider for a moment the fact, that, as an affair of interest, I had more to offer than the count. He listened courteously while I explained to him every point of my position; but he returned inexorably to his

own. The contract must be fulfilled, and while I remained at Venice I could not be permitted to see his sister. There was no violence or unkindness in all this, only a calm matter-of-fact granting of all the circumstances, while proceeding as if they did not exist. This quiet, resolute cruelty, might well have deprived me of all hope, considering that I had no promise, no assurance from Beatrice herself, and that she was an Italian girl, under the tyranny of such social customs as these; but it did not so drive me. To set against despair I had the remembrance of Beatrice's beautiful face as I had seen it that morning, and I had the evidence of the count's jealousy. The two conquered. I knew in my inmost soul that she loved me, and that she was doomed to the misery and the shame of a loveless marriage. To know this, was to take the resolution which I formed.

Paolo and I parted that night with mutual cordiality, and I fully believe he did not regard the matter as one which need make any difference between him and me. We should meet as usual during my stay in Venice, though he said frankly it would be better I should not present myself at the Palazzo D'Oria: such a course would only lead to Beatrice's being kept in a kind of gentle imprisonment until my departure. I allowed him to believe that I accepted my fate, and would obey his injunctions;—but when I left the palazzo that night, with a glove which I found on the floor of the balcony, and which I knew to be Beatrice's, hidden in my breast—I vowed, if resolution and dexterity could accomplish such a task, that his sister should be saved from her cruel, treacherous Italian suitor, and made as happy as love and care could make her in my English home.

You will be prepared to learn that I met Beatrice on the following morning; that I waited for her, near the great church, with a grave apprehension that this time her mother might be with her. It proved to be unfounded; Beatrice was alone. She looked pale, ill, and frightened. This was no time for hesitation. I spoke to her as she was leaving the church; I walked by her side across the piazza. Fate favoured us. No one whom she knew was there, and I was made doubly certain of two things: that she loved me, and that she abhorred Count Alberto; but I learned also that she regarded her marriage with him as inevit-

able. She protested that for us there could be no hope. I tried to re-assure her, but I had no time for argument or protestation. I could only arrange with Beatrice that she should send her attendant to meet me at a certain shop at a certain hour, when I would meet her, and give her a letter for her mistress. We parted, and I went to my hotel to write the letter.

I need not tell you what I wrote; in what colours I painted the English home to which I would take her if she would trust herself to me; the future happiness and consideration which would win her parents' pardon and ensure their contentment. I told her that if she would consent I should at once leave Venice for the purpose of making all the necessary arrangements for our marriage at Genoa;—it would not be safe, and I would not return until the day before that which we should fix for our flight. The maid was punctual to her appointment, my letter reached Beatrice's hands safely, and her reply was in mine the same night. I pass over her fears, her hesitation, her natural reluctance to violate all the traditions of her race and country, even to abandon a home which she acknowledged to be most unhappy. Briefly, she consented; and I purchased the assistance of her attendant and her consent to accompany Beatrice in our flight. In two days I was ready to leave Venice; during those two days I saw nothing of Paolo, whose cold indifference to his sister's wretchedness shocked me, apart from my own feelings. My final instructions to Beatrice were as follows:—I would return to Venice on the day fixed for the masked ball at Princess Levinsky's, at which Beatrice, her mother, and Paolo were to be present. After they had started for the ball, Francesca was to leave the Palazzo D'Oria unobserved, in a gondola which I would have in waiting, and follow the concourse which would be speeding to the palazzo of the Polish princess. Arrived at the landing-place, Francesca would remain in the gondola until I should bring her mistress to her; which accomplished, we were to row for the spot where the boat from my yacht (at present lying in harbour at Genoa) would await us.

On board the yacht Beatrice should find every necessary for her toilet, and provision for her comfort. I would see her safely on board, be put ashore again in the yacht's boat, and leave Venice before the morning, travelling by vetturino. I knew

that Beatrice had no fear of the sea; I was certain of the fidelity of the captain and the crew of my yacht, and I resolved to shield the girl, who was risking so much for me, from reproach as far as it should be possible. We should not meet again until a few hours before she was to become my wife. Pursuit of her would be impossible—she would be in safety on the high seas—and even in case of accident or delay in our meeting, my skipper would have the fullest instructions. There remained the plan for our meeting at the ball, and for the actual departure. All the ladies would wear the invariable black dominos, and these would be deposited in the vestiario adjoining the grand saloon; so much I had contrived to learn of the topography of the palazzo of the princess. When the gaiety of the ball was at its height and Paolo at a distance from his sister, she was to draw near to the door opening upon the great corridor, and pleading a torn dress as an excuse for leaving him, to her partner in the dance, pass through into the vestiario, put on the first domino which came to her hand, and go out at the other end. There she would find me, in mask and domino, and in a few minutes she would be by my side in the gondola. One precaution remained to be taken: I must provide her with a safe means of communicating with me at the last hour, lest anything should have interfered to thwart our projects, or necessitate delay. I arranged with her that I would go to the ball earlier than the Marchesa D'Oria ever presented herself on such occasions—so that Paolo should not by any ill chance hear my name announced—and standing behind one of the pillars at the entrance of the saloon, I would watch for the arrival of the marchesa and her daughter. If all was not right, Beatrice, who knew what my costume was to be, was to drop her glove, weighted with the opal ring—I sent it to her with my letter—to ensure its falling to the ground, and I should then withdraw, and await tidings from her—through Francesca's agency—on the following morning at the Piazza of St. Mark.

If, on the contrary, all was right and our project was secure, Beatrice was to wear the jewel hidden in her bosom, and to touch it with her fan as she passed me.

Even now I could not endure to dwell upon the feelings with which I lived through the time after I received the

assent of Beatrice to my plan. I went to Genoa, made all the proposed arrangements personally and by letter, and found myself again at Venice, the yacht in readiness, and my presence unsuspected by Paolo, on the appointed day. The Carnival was at its height, and with the evening the Queen of the Adriatic put on all her splendour. The city blazed with light and colour, the air was full of song; laughter, and radiance. The Grand Canal presented a scene of magical beauty and of incessant motion. I had kept out of sight all day: I dared not risk discovery by trying to get a sight of Beatrice, though I did not doubt she had been displayed by her mother and the count wherever fashion demanded. Paolo would have had his own amusements, as I knew, on hand, but Count Alberto might have discovered me. He was not going to the ball; I had heard him say so, and had laid all my plans accordingly.

The night came, and I went to the palazzo of the Polish princess. I wore the conventional dress and cloak of a mediæval student, with a flat cap and a flaxen wig—the most widely different costume from that which I had arranged with Paolo in the days of the friendship which love had destroyed, which I could contrive—and, even without my mask, I do not think, my dear mother, you would have known me. I was among the earliest arrivals. The scene grew rapidly brilliant; but I hardly noted it, and took up my position at once with sensations which I cannot describe. At last, at last, I heard the Marchesa D'Oria announced. She entered the ball-room, accompanied by Paolo and by Beatrice, whose face was perfectly colourless, but nevertheless more beautiful than I had ever seen it. My heart beat heavily as they passed me, the black-and-silver-broidered skirt of Beatrice's Roman dress touching me. Though the entertainment was called a masked ball, it was an understood thing that every one entered the ball-room unmasked; so that the disguise, when resumed, was not real, but only a test of memory. Beatrice's mask of black velvet and lace dangled from her right arm. Her hands were gloved, and she carried a black-and-silver fan. Only my eyes could have detected that she saw me, as the fan touched her bosom for a moment, and was then dropped by its riband at her side, as she mingled with the crowd. I watched her and the others for some time; until I saw that the marchesa was surrounded by

gossips, Beatrice by admirers, and that Paolo was intent upon the business I knew of. I ascertained that the gondola, under my orders, was lying by the marble stairs, one of a flotilla; the signal-scarf was tied on the arm of the gondolier. Then I took my domino from among the number in the vestiario—deserted by the attendants—put on my mask, and, passing through the outer door, found the corridor empty. Hearing, as if in a dream, the jubilant strains of music from the ball-room, I waited at the closed door. My watch was secure and uninterrupted. It had endured perhaps half-an-hour when I heard a step within; the door opened, and a figure shrouded in a domino appeared. The folds of the domino were held across the breast by a hand I knew, and on it glittered the opal ring!

"My own Beatrice! my true love!" There was no time for speech. She faltered out something as I bade her hide the ring once more in her bosom, lest Paolo would recognise it should ill luck send him in our way; and we went swiftly along the corridor to a second door which gave admittance to the vestibule. It was half full of people—guests arriving, guests departing, and servants; but no one heeded us. We went on, steadily and slowly now, a stately dame and lawful cavalier, down the marble stairs to the landing-place, where the gondolas lay. One was in the act of shooting away; mine was the second in place.

"Is it there? Are we safe?"

"We are perfectly safe, my dearest."

In another moment I had handed her into the boat, and stepped into the gloomy carriage-like receptacle, in one corner of which a cloaked figure was seated. The gondola moved; it was being pushed off. Beatrice clutched me by the arm, and whispered hoarsely:

"That is not Francesca."

"Not Francesca!" I exclaimed, and caught hold of the cloak. The figure rose with a cry like that of a wild beast:—

"No, it is I! I bribed Francesca higher."

Count Alberto dei Ceratti flung himself upon me, dagger in hand. There was a moment's violent struggle, in which I almost dashed him off; I saw one of Beatrice's arms between me and my assassin, I felt the other clasp my neck from behind; while he held me round the body with the deadly grip of hate, I felt the boat strike something, and lurch. I

lost my footing; the lifted dagger fell, and buried itself in the breast of Beatrice.

Now you know the whole truth, my dear mother. Do you wonder that it has banished me from England and from every familiar association for two years; and that it has been impossible for me to put it in writing until now; when I have lived it out, and lived it down? Keep this story safely, with my lost love's picture—Paolo gave it to me, when he pardoned and learned to pity me—until I come home.

STEPHEN DRELCINCOURT.

"Until I come home." Stephen Drelincourt's story has been in his mother's possession two months, but no other communication from him has reached her during that time. As she lays it by with the miniature of Beatrice this Christmas Eve, and prepares to retire to rest, she sighs deeply, a sigh of weariness of spirit. "Am I ever to see him again?" she murmurs; "is my waiting never to end? The only son of his mother and she a widow. He has lived it out, he says, and lived it down. I cannot live out and live down his absence."

She is crossing the spacious room, when a loud ringing at the entrance door and a vehement barking of dogs arrest her steps. The sounds mingle with the midnight chimes, and the outburst of the joy-bells which welcome Christmas morn. She goes hastily into the hall, and is caught in her son's arms.

"It is Christmas in earnest, now," is the general sentiment at the castle "since Mr. Drelincourt has come home."

THE FOURTH ENTRY IN GEORGE HADDON'S NOTE-BOOK.

I.

PARIS. In wintry weather. Not slush and damp; not chill, yellow fog; nor dreary, driving rain; but high, vaulted, steel-blue sky; hard, crisp earth; slanting sunlight, merely touching, not melting, the frost crystals which gem the leafless trees, stud the scrolled balconies, and shine everywhere. Paris, in its winter splendour, with brilliant equipages rolling along its great thoroughfares, conveying women wrapped in velvet of price and furs almost priceless; women with eyes and cheeks all the brighter for the shrewdly biting cold. Paris, with its poor, to whom that same

shrewd bite, catching tender flesh through thin garments, is deadly; and the breath of the frost-demon is more cruel than the pangs of the hunger-wolf.

Through the throng on the long, long boulevards, whose idlers are pressing to the shop-windows to admire and appraise the last novelties in *étrennes* (for it is the final fortnight of the year, and the obligations of the *jour de l'an* are jogging memories and opening purse-clasps); where the carriages are setting down and taking up purchasers, and the *flâneur* has, notwithstanding the cold, quite a busy time of it; I follow a woman. She is making her way to the *Place Pigalle*, and she pushes on, undistracted by the objects which claim the attention of the crowd, with steady persistency. She is a young woman, plainly dressed, but with a touch of the Parisian in the neatness and perfect fit of every article of her attire; she is not handsome, but has an attractive face, mild, intelligent, and purposeful. She carries a light shiny black box in her hand; and, as I follow her, I see that she halts only once in her long walk, it is to buy a bunch of Parma violets, at a shop where they are fresh, but not cheap by any means.

The young woman reaches her destination. It is an old house, with a deep entry, in the *Place Pigalle*. It is not in good repair, nor are the court, the *conciergerie*, or the staircase very clean, and their defects come out strongly in the winter sun. The young woman ascends the stairs, until she reaches the fourth landing, which is narrow and bare, but lighted by a large window, through which one sees the busy street below dwarfed by height. She opens a door on the landing, which admits her to a narrow passage, leading to a small apartment, consisting of two rooms and a tiny kitchen. The furniture is poor, but not squalid, and in the little domain cleanliness reigns supreme. The young woman goes on through the first room, *salon* and *salle-à-manger* in one, into the second, which bears an air of much greater comfort, and has a tenant. A carefully-husbanded wood fire is burning in the open grate, a screen stands before the bed, and a couch, well provided with soft pillows and warm covering, is drawn close to the fire. On the couch lies a woman, the perfect stillness of whose limbs, the pinched paleness of whose face, and the patient weariness of whose faded eyes, tell a story of lingering and hopeless illness. Perhaps only an artist's eye could

now discern that she had once been beautiful, for only the lines of the face, only the correctness of form and delicacy of feature remain. The deep blue of the large eyes has faded, and for their brightness there is heaviness; for the rose-tints which once bloomed on the cheeks and the lips there is an evenly-spread pallor, and for the masses of golden hair, some thin folds lie smooth beneath the border of a snowy muslin cap. She lies back upon her pillows, quite still, her hands folded over the edge of a warm quilted *couvre-pied*, and her shoulders covered with a fine but faded *Cachmere* shawl, a real Indian fabric, once, no doubt, the realisation of its owner's pet ambition. She is looking at the light coming through the window-panes, as sick people, whose sickness is unto death, love to look at it, when the young woman comes in, with the freshness of the wintry air on her, the flush of exercise on her cheek, and healthful brightness in her eyes. With a quick glance she sees that all is right, and smiles at the sick woman on the couch, who smiles at her in return, and stretches out a hand to take the violets.

"I knew you would bring me violets," she says, "but how quickly you have come back. It is a long way, if I can remember rightly, to the *Rue des Saints Pères*."

"It is a very long way, but the dry cold is pleasant, and I liked the walk. And then, *Madame de Croye* praised the wreaths so much, it was quite encouraging; she has promised me many orders; and given me one. It is for a bunch of water-lilies, and she wants them for the *jour de l'an*."

"Short notice, *Stephanie*, with all you have to do beside."

"Oh, no," returned the younger woman cheerfully, "there's plenty of time for all."

She has taken off her bonnet and cloak, put them away, and arranged a little table at the foot of the invalid's couch; and she now seats herself before it, and turns out the contents of the shiny black box, which consist of some of the materials used in the making of artificial flowers. Bright-coloured muslin, crape, silk, and feathers; spirals of wire, tinted paper—she inspects them, counts up their price, selects the articles she requires for immediate use, and, after she has eaten a sparing meal in the adjoining room and served to the invalid some delicate food, she sets to work as if she had not done anything

fatiguing previously, with a smiling face and fingers whose rapid dexterity the sick woman watches with sad, loving eyes.

While she works, Stephanie also talks. She has wonders to tell her companion about the boulevards and the shops, the carriages and the toilettes, though she never paused for a moment to look at them for her own delectation; and it is noticeable that she is especially communicative respecting the theatres. She has looked at all the "affiches" on her route, and actually purchased the day's *Entr'acte*. When the sun sets, and she has to light the lamp, and to leave the invalid by herself while she attends to her business in the kitchen department, she puts the *Entr'acte* into her hands, and the invalid studies attentively that apparently most uninteresting topic to a person in her position, the list of all the spectacles at which Paris may divert itself on that evening. It interests her, however; and when the evening closes in, bringing no change to her, or to the steady industry of her companion, she talks of plays which she has seen in her time, and tells Stephanie anecdotes of singers and dancers and actors, who are mere names to the listener. And yet the "time" she alludes to as if it were very old indeed, is not in reality far past, for Giulietta Silva is not thirty-five years old. It is just eight o'clock when the bell is rung on the landing, and Stephanie says,

"There is Pierre? May he come in here? You are not too tired?" Receiving an affirmative assurance, she lays down the tiny blade with which she has been crimping the leaf of a carnation, and leaves the room. She does not return immediately; there is a pleasant sound of cheerful voices in the little saloon, for ten minutes or so. When she comes back, she is accompanied by a slight, dark young man, whom the invalid welcomes as her brave Pierre.

The brave Pierre has gentle manners, and a low voice, and he has hardly taken his seat on the other side of Stephanie's table before he begins to roll up little spirals of green paper, and to divide small bits of feather into smaller bits, trimming them with sharp shears, slender enough for a fairy's work-box, mechanically assisting Stephanie, as a matter of course, but with fingers curiously deft and delicate of touch for a man's.

"Don't you think you have tried your eyes enough for to-day, Pierre?" says

Stephanie, as he sets to work seriously. "There is more doing than usual at your fabrique, you say, and you get your full share of it. Why not rest to-night?"

"Because I am not tired," replies Pierre, "and I suppose I am not tired because I have had my spirits raised to-day. Madame," he addresses the invalid, but goes on with his dexterous fingering of Stephanie's flower petals the while, "I have had my spirits raised. By whom? you ask. By Gustave Leblond, our foreman, I reply. And when you ask me how, I tell you, without vanity, by his praises of my designs for ladies' ornaments in jewels, and my workmanship. I have gained many of the ideas by watching Stephanie at her work, and studying with her the living models she works from, the flower-children of the gardens and the fields; and I have put them into designs which our foreman finds original. He finds also that I do my work well; my eye is true, and my hand is neat and steady, and so Gustave Leblond tells me to-day that he is going into the jeweller's business on his own account, and that he will take me as his foreman, if I will agree to work for no one but him, and to give him my designs as a speciality."

Pierre Giroux is then a working jeweller, and the deft dexterity of his fingers comes by practice as well as by nature.

"This is indeed good news," says Madame Silva; "and I rejoice to hear it. What do you say to it, Stephanie?"

"I say that it is good news, but—" she smiles with an arch sweetness which makes her face charming, "I say it does not mean all that Pierre would have it signify."

"Hear her now! I appeal to you, madame, if she is not proud! When I told her a little of this just now, and asked her if she did not think we could be married soon, and have a snug little home to begin with, instead of the long, long waiting that seemed before us only yesterday, she gave herself airs, and asked whether I supposed she was going to marry a day before she should have saved her dot of three thousand francs, because fortune had come my way. It is all her pride, and what does it mean? I would say nothing if there were my parents to be regarded, who might think little of her because of her dot; but I am alone in the world, still more alone than she is, for she has you, and there is no one to talk or to interfere. So her pride is all for me, to

my address, who only want her love. Don't you think it is a shame, madame; and that I am ill-used?"

"Very ill-used indeed, Pierre, and I promise you I shall bring Stephanie to reason. When does this M. Leblond talk of commencing business on his own account?"

"Early in the New Year, madame."

"Indeed. And you and Stephanie have been affianced—let me see—how long?"

"A year to-day."

There is a pause. Madame Silva turns her head upon her pillow, away from the light, and closes her eyes. The conversation is thenceforth confined to the betrothed lovers, and it lasts until ten o'clock, when Pierre Giroux takes his leave. Madame Silva is weaker and wearier than usual that night, and when, with all conceivable care and attention, she has been transferred from her couch to her bed—the only transition her life ever knows—and Stephanie's monotonous day's work has come to an end, they are both silent.

"To-morrow is our good doctor's day," says the invalid, as Stephanie stoops to kiss her on the forehead; "after his visit we will talk of this good news."

A sofa-bed in the salon is Stephanie's own resting-place. It is so placed that she is within reach of the invalid's low tones, and the intervening door stands open. Long after the girl is sound asleep, Madame Silva's eyes remain unclosed, watching the wood ashes as they drop, and smoulder, and die. Not pain, but thoughts, hold her eyes waking to-night.

II.

It is the close of the year; the vigil of the great Parisian festival, the Jour de l'An. In the little apartment au quatrième of the old house in the Place Pigalle are the three friends. But a change has passed over their aspect and their relations. Madame Silva has acted on her conviction that Pierre is very ill-used by Stephanie with such effect that Stephanie has repented of her pride and her stubbornness, and has consented to marry Pierre out of hand, and to put off the completion of the dôt. The quiet wedding is to take place on the morrow, and the newly-married couple are to take possession of a little home of their own, no farther removed from Madame Silva than the other side of the landing, after an excursion to Asnières, of two days' duration. Stephanie will not desert her post for a

longer time, and has been brought to consent only by the admirable conduct of a young person recommended by Doctor Leroux himself, and by whom she proposes to replace herself for the nonce. The young person has been dismissed, and Stephanie and Pierre sit beside Madame Silva's bed. Doctor Leroux has visited her several times within the last fortnight. Her one transition is made no more, and Madame Silva knows well that this Jour de l'An is the last which she shall see. But she keeps her knowledge to herself, and questions Stephanie gaily about the little preparations for the wedding, which she cannot witness. Spread out on the disused couch is Stephanie's wedding gown and bonnet, and everything is ready. Madame Silva has told Pierre that she wishes to speak with him to-night, and there is a little air of solemnity about the three. Madame Silva lies high up on a pile of pillows, her right hand slipped under one of them, and addresses herself to Pierre.

"I am going to tell you a story, my brave Pierre—a story which Stephanie has never heard. It is my own. You will soon know why I tell it to you now, and have said nothing of it hitherto. The first thing I can remember of my childhood is the wonder and delight of seeing a lighted stage, and actors on it. My father had some employment, I don't know what, in the Fenice, at Venice, where I was born, and my mother was a kind of head housemaid, and attended to the dressing-rooms. All my recollections are of the seamy side of theatrical life; I ran about the place like a dog or a cat, when I was little, and nobody minded 'Giulietta,' not even my father or my mother, of whom I have no dearer memory than I have of many of the Signori and Signore who used to make mellifluous love to one another on the stage, and quarrel and backbite one another plentifully behind the scenes, thereby causing me profound astonishment until I was of an age to discriminate, in the broad sense, between the real and the fictitious scenes in the midst of which I lived.

"While I was still a young child my mother died, and then I must have been shockingly neglected, for I remember being hungry, and cold, and very lonely, and wandering away by myself along the terraces by the canal, and making friends with the boatmen. Next to seeing the stage lighted, and peeping at the

performances, I loved a row in a gondola, and I often had one; for I had picked up a playfellow, one Renzo Silva, a boy somewhat older than myself, whose father owned three handsome gondolas. I dwell on this seeming trifle, it held the germ of all my fate in it. When I was ten years old some one found out that I could dance, and my father, who had married a woman who ill-treated both him and me, determined that I should be a stage-dancer. I was delighted with the idea, and though I suffered horribly during the training, I was not displeased with the reality. I really did dance well, with great spirit; and as I always danced to a story in my mind, I suppose there was something original and characteristic in my performance. It was well for me that I did like it, for I never had any rest, and I never reaped any reward. I performed second and third-rate parts in the now old-fashioned ballets en action in vogue at that time, much before any of my comrades were out of the crowd of the corps de ballet, and my stepmother got all the money that I earned. I must have been sixteen when my father died, and at that age great things were prophesied of me. I was quite at my stepmother's mercy, and she was most unmerciful, so that after a year I began to contemplate the escaping from her by any means as an object to be attained, if possible. Some one also had found out that I could sing, and I had, nothing loth, cultivated that talent too, so that when Renzo and I exchanged sentiments respecting the comparative hardships of our lot—he was a gondolier now, on one of his father's boats, and a very handsome, fine fellow, no better treated at home than I was—it was not unnatural that we should think we might improve our circumstances by joining our fortunes. We loved each other more faithfully and worthily than might have been supposed possible, considering our respective manner of life, and there was some real romance in our folly, when we made up our minds to run away together, and to seek our fortunes in France. We settled the details of our plan in all but one momentous particular—where the money was to come from, to pay for our journey, and to support us afterwards, until we should get engagements in Paris; for that was what we were bent on doing, Renzo entertaining no doubt that he too could dance and sing, and act too, for that matter? We

had to face this important question, and it was decided that on a certain night I was to refuse to appear on the stage unless my stepmother agreed to hand over a portion of my salary to me, and that this course should be pursued until a sum sufficient for our purposes had been accumulated. We parted, and I proceeded to carry out my promise. The result was that my stepmother beat me with a broomstick, and threatened to turn me into the street, but neither the beating nor the threat shook my purpose. It was Carnival time, and the general merriment enraged and embittered me the more. An hour before the time when I should have carried out my purpose, and thrown the stage into confusion, a message from Renzo reached me, through one of the hangers-on at the theatre; it was merely this—'Dance to-night, and come down to the Piazza early to-morrow.' I did dance that night; I did go down to the Piazza di San Marco the next morning, and there was Renzo, who told me I need not trouble myself about money—he had more than enough. No efforts of mine could extract from him the origin of this unexpected wealth; he would do no more than assure me that he had not taken money which belonged to his father or to any other person. I was easily satisfied, and we made our escape the next day.

"We travelled to Paris, and began to seek for employment, which I was long in finding. I suffered a great deal in the process, in many ways, which I do not wish to recal. At length I got an engagement at one of the minor theatres, and I made an instantaneous success. My husband (we were legally married in Paris) got no employment, and after a time ceased to look for any. I loved him, I revelled in my success, I was happy in our disorderly life. But there was a sort of spell on Renzo. He idled, he sulked, he smoked, he drank, he gambled. At length my illusion cleared away, and I knew him for what he was. His mysterious money soon melted, and he never earned a shilling. We had been married four years, I had just signed an engagement at a theatre of a rank far beyond my expectations, and a vista of something like wealth was opening before me, when Renzo was brought home one night, senseless and mortally hurt. He had thrown away his life in the quarrel of a worthless woman, in a tavern brawl.

He did not know me when he came out of the swoon, and he never spoke coherently during the twenty-four hours he lived. His wandering utterances were all of Venice, his father's gondolas, and a certain Count Alberto. I remembered the count well, and the girl he stabbed, in the Carnival time, just before Renzo and I went away from Venice, and how the people howled at him when he was taken away to prison after his life sentence. I found out, through Renzo's raving, what was the source whence the money he never would account for had come to him. It was the price he received from a Jew dealer in precious stones, for a rich jewel which he found in a gondola belonging to his father. He talked wildly of seeing the jewel shine, when the boat put in to the landing-place, and the people were crowding round, and how he had picked it up quickly, 'out of the blood,' he said, but that, of course, was only raving. He died with his head upon my arm, and the name of another woman upon his lips, and I forgave him for that and for all.

"The manager gave me a week, and then I entered upon my new engagement. It meant a new life. A very different audience applauded me now, very different temptations beset me. My salary was good, and I spent it all. I touched no other money. My life was full enough of pleasure, but there was no guilt in it. I pass over a year, and I come to one evening which has a double importance in my memory. When I arrived at the theatre, I found confusion and dismay prevailing; an accident had occurred among the machinery, and one of the carpenters had been killed. The man was honest, industrious, and esteemed, a widower, with one child, a little girl of eight. A subscription for the child was proposed, but I volunteered to take charge of her future. The child was Stephanie. Poor child! it was not for long that she had an efficient protector; it was not long until our rôles were reversed. That was one event of the evening. But there was a second. In the course of the performance a slight interruption, which the audience were inclined to resent, was caused by some men who came in late. I looked at them, and saw that one of the number was looking at me intently, and I was afterwards conscious that he never desisted from the watch he kept on me while I was on the stage. Some one near me told me his name—never mind

what it was, I will call him Prince Michael. The next night he came again, the third again—no need to dwell on that part of the story. He made my acquaintance and paid me the easy insolent court which a man of his class deems fitting to a woman of mine. I put it aside lightly, the man had no charm for me. He was piqued, his temper was roused, and he either felt or affected a grand passion. I laughed at the tragedy as I had laughed at the farce; and then he offered me marriage. Had I loved him, I should have been too wise to take him at his word, but I had come to hate him as I never hated any human being. I had a superstitious dread of him, the old fears of my childhood returned to me, I felt that the man was a jettatore, and that the Evil-eye might any day be cast on me. At length this weakness took such hold of me that it injured my health, and began to tell on my nerves. His ceaseless pursuit became a torture, and I determined, when my engagement should terminate, to leave Paris, and hide myself somewhere. The sight of Prince Michael became an omen of sinister augury to me, and he knew it. The cruelty of making me dread him, of forcing me to feel that he was keeping a constant watch on me, pleased his cruel nature, in which what he called love was always akin to hate.

"Within a week of the close of my engagement, I suddenly missed him. The morning brought no letter or message; the afternoon no visit; I found no bouquet in my dressing-room at the theatre, and the prince's place in the salle was vacant. I wondered for a day or two, then I began to breathe freely. After all, his melodramatic threats had meant nothing, and he had retreated from the ignoble contest in which a woman had beaten him. I received the ironical compliments which were paid me on the disappearance of the prince with genuine good-humour, and laughed at myself for my notions about the Evil-eye.

"A week had elapsed, and the last night of the season had arrived. I had neither seen nor heard anything of Prince Michael. When I went to the theatre, a letter, a bouquet, and a small packet were handed to me. The letter contained only a few lines: "Good-bye, Gialietta. You were right, and nothing is eternal—not even my despair. I have got over it, according to your amiable prediction; and as I am as tired of Paris as you are of me, I am

off. But I always part friends with a woman, and I like to be remembered otherwise than as a bore and a tyrant. Wear the ring I send you, if not for my sake, for its own. The Jew who sold it to me at Venice swore the opal was a jewel richer than all its tribe, and I do not think he foreswore himself very widely."

"The ring was a splendid one indeed. The centre was an opal as large as a filbert, with gleams of red, and green, and yellow, and violet in it, set in diamonds. I put it on my finger and admired it with genuine pleasure. My spirits were at their highest, the prince had gone away, and I might wear the ring without blame or fear. I shewed it to some of the others in the green-room, and they praised its beauty; all but one. A southern girl said: "Opal is unlucky, if you were not born in October. It's all right if you were; if not, it's a *porte malheur*." I was on the stage a minute later, with her words in my ears. Was I born in October? I could not tell; my birthdays had made no mark in my childhood. Back with a rush came my superstitious dread; while I was singing the words of my rôle, my eyes sought for the prince in the accustomed place; but vainly. He was not there. The piece was a *Feerie*, in immense vogue, and the leading part was mine. In the second act I had to stand on the brow of a rock, overhanging a river, and summon the water-sprites to slow music, singing the incantation while I swayed myself about with the rhythmical motion of Oriental dancing. The scene was always enthusiastically applauded, and had never presented the slightest difficulty to me before. Nor did it now. I ascended the slope easily, was greeted as usual, raised my arms so as to extend them over the flood, made one step forward, and fell headlong down.

"Since that night I have been a helpless invalid. At first the injury was believed to be mortal, but that sentence was commuted to the imprisonment for life which my adopted child has cheered. Every one was good to me. I had a considerable sum in my possession when the accident occurred, and my friends subscribed enough to add to it so as to buy for me a small annuity. I was not patient or submissive for a long, long time. It was very hard to bear, especially when people began to forget me, and solitude set in. I kept Stephanie at school for a few years, but I could not afford more; my small income had no elasticity, and no supplement. She came home to me; she

learned a mode of earning money which need not separate her from me. You know the rest, Pierre; you, who have won her. It has not been an unhappy life; no life can be unhappy which counts such love as mine for Stephanie, and hers for me, as its best treasure.

"Now, I am going to explain why I tell you this story on the eve of your marriage-day. It is because I have never parted with the opal ring, the *porte-malheur* which fulfilled its weird to me. What has been the fate of the man who meant the gift of it to bring me misfortune—for he believed in all the superstitions of his nation—I know not. I have kept the ring, with the intention of reversing the spell, if such there be in it, in our case at least."

Madame Silva draws her hand from beneath the pillow, and stretches it towards Pierre. A jewel glitters in the open palm.

"I have never worn the ring, and Stephanie has never seen it; I knew she would have had me sell it, when it has sometimes been hard to get the comforts by which she would have had my lot always alleviated. I have witnessed her untiring industry, her undeviating thrift, and, looking on at her life, have learned what there may be in a woman. I have seen the true love come into that life, and learned from it what it was that never had any existence in mine. You can appraise this jewel, Pierre, you can tell its value, and that sum is Stephanie's dôt. Hush, my children, I will hear no objection. This has been my purpose throughout. I only lay this condition on you, Pierre, that you never put that ring on Stephanie's finger for even one moment. Take it away, out of my sight to-night, and sell it as soon as possible."

"I think I know someone who will buy it, at its full value," says Pierre, when, after he and Stephanie have striven to thank her, the invalid dismisses them to their brief parting for the few hours which remain before their marriage. "Leblond has brought a clientèle from the old place; and there's an Englishman among them, who ordered one of my posy breast-knots lately. It was for his fiancée, he said, and if it pleased him he would purchase some other things. I will send Leblond to him with the ring to-morrow morning."

"Pray do, Pierre. So we shall be rid of the omen, if indeed there be one, on our wedding-day."

THE FIFTH ENTRY IN GEORGE HADDON'S NOTE-BOOK.

I SEE before me a broad expanse of turf, green and fresh, and beautifully kept. It is bordered on either side by trees: some of enormous girth, with huge limbs and wide-spreading branches; others apparently newly planted, fenced round to protect them from being hurt by the children, whose shrill laughter I hear from time to time as they carry on their play in the bright cheerful morning sun. At one end of the turf wall I see an old cumbrous red-brick house, standing in a stiff and formal garden, which I recognise at once as Kensington Palace. Up to this time no human being has been within sight, but now I see two figures emerging from the trees, and walking at a slow pace towards the palace. A man and a woman, both young, tall, and good-looking, dressed in a strange odd fashion: she with a high waist and a huge bonnet, he with the velvet collar of his coat standing up round his ears, his broadly cut trousers hiding most of his foot, and tightly strapped, the fashion of thirty years ago. They are walking side by side, and very close together: the woman's white ungloved hand, on which I see glistening the opal ring, lying on the man's arm. Hush! the young man speaks:

"No, darling!" I hear him say. "No! I dare say you, who are full of a girl's romance, will think me but practical and prosaic when I tell you that I am bound to confess one of the greatest sources of happiness to me is that the course of our true love has run so smoothly. If I had been differently situated, I might have gloried in encountering trouble for the sake of winning you; and loving you with my whole heart and soul as I do, I have no doubt I should have managed to surmount them. But, looking at my present position, with all the weight and responsibility of my father's business on my back, having to be all day long in Lincoln's Inn, and nearly all night long reading up cases, with these few minutes with you in the early morning as my sole recreation, I am thankful indeed that my suit is favoured by your father, and that there are no obstacles in its way. You follow me, Margaret?"

"Yes, James!" she replies; "I follow you, and I am sure you are right. It was merely a little girlish waywardness which prompted me to say what I did just now.

Your work is so hard that it would be dreadful indeed to think of your being harassed with complications about me."

"Recollect," he says, laying his hand lightly on hers, "that such complications have already existed! I have not forgotten, if you have, the tortures which I suffered when Mr. Frederick Haddon——"

"What!" cried George, springing up, "what name was that?"

"Silence!" said the professor, motioning him, with a commanding gesture, to his seat. "You will awake her, and the thread of continuity will be lost. Go on!" he added, turning to the patient.

"When Mr. Frederick Haddon was pleased to pester you with his insolent addresses?"

"James!" says the girl, looking up honestly into his face, "Don't recur to that dreadful time! It is all gone and past, thank Heaven! Mr. Haddon has long since given up his pursuit of me, and his family, who I thought were at one time inclined to be vexed with all of us on my account, must have forgiven my refusal of him, for my brother Mark, as you know, was taken into their bank, and speaks highly of the kindness shown to him."

"I know it," mutters the young man, "and looked upon it as a sop at the time. However, as six months have elapsed since Mark took possession of his ledger and stool, and that precious Frederick Haddon has not tried to renew his acquaintance with you, I suppose my lawyer's caution made me suspicious without a cause. You wear the ring still, Margaret, I see?"

"Still, James! I hope to wear it to my dying day," she says, raising it to her lips.

"Wear it on your wedding-day, my darling," says he, looking at her with eyes full of love and admiration. "Only another two months to wait, pet. Before the leaves are brown the long vacation will be here, and I shall take my bride to my old Devonshire home. Nine o'clock! There never were minutes melted away so fast as these. Walk with me to the gate, Margaret, and let my last glimpse of you comfort me among the deed-boxes and tape-tied papers."

I see the girl again. She is walking up an old-fashioned suburban square. At the door of one of the houses she stops and knocks. She lives there apparently, for when the door is opened she is passing

through into the hall, when she notices the scared look of the servant. "What is the matter, Hannah?" she asks.

"I don't know, miss, I'm sure, what it is, but something dreadful has occurred! About an hour ago a messenger from the office brought a letter for mistress, and she opened it when I was in the room; and all of a sudden she went as pale as a ghost, her knees trembled under her, and she would have fallen, but I pushed a chair forward just in time. Then she burst out crying, and cried for more than an hour; and now she has locked herself in her room, and I can hear her from time to time sobbing as though her heart would break!"

"Did my mother say anything as to the cause of this trouble, Hannah?" asks Margaret, hurriedly divesting herself of her bonnet.

"No, miss, she didn't say anything; but when she had her first crying fit she dropped the letter on the floor, and in picking it up I just glanced at it permissuously, and I saw Master Mark's name."

"My brother?"

"Yes, miss, and I think Master Mark must have been taken ill, for while the mistress was sobbing, I heard her say to herself several times, 'My poor misguided boy! my wretched, wretched boy!'"

"I will go to my mother at once! My father has not yet come home?"

"No, miss. The letter was from the master, as I've said, but he wasn't at the office, for I asked the messenger, who said he had fetched a hackney-coach for the master, and had told the man to drive to Haddon's bank."

As these words ring in her ears, Margaret turns very pale, and hurries up the stairs. Her mother must have heard and recognised her footstep, for the door is open, and in an instant the two women are in each other's arms.

"What is this I hear from Hannah, mother? It is true, for I see the traces of tears on your cheeks, and you tremble so that you can scarcely stand. Something dreadful has happened. What is it? Tell me, I implore you!"

"I cannot tell you, Margaret," says the old lady, whose tears burst out afresh. "Your father will break it to you when he comes."

"It is something about Mark! Is he ill? Is—he dead?"

"No! he is not dead!" cried the mother, whose voice is almost inarticulate with

sobbing; "I almost wish he were! I almost wish he were!"

"Mother! mother! what are you saying? Think of Mark, our handsome, splendid Mark!"

"I do think of him, Margaret! I think of the pride I have had in him, of the way in which I have worshipped him since his birth, and I wonder whether this is not a punishment upon me for having made an idol of a human creature, and preferred him to his Creator."

"There is my father's knock," says the girl, starting at the sound. "Dry your eyes, mother, and do not let him find you in this state. It is too late. He is here!"

The room door opens, and a small man, with delicate features and snow-white hair and whiskers, enters. He has a wearied look, his shoulders are rounded, and his step slow and laboured. He bends over his wife and kisses her on the forehead. Then he takes his daughter's hands in his, and gazes long and earnestly into her eyes. As he does so his own become suffused, he turns hastily away, and throws himself into a chair.

"You have been to the bank, Edward?" asks the wife, timidly.

"I have," he replies, in a husky voice. "I have just come from there."

"What news is there? have you seen Mr. Haddon? Is there any hope?"

"There is hope—if hope it can be called," he replies, in the same voice, with his eyes fixed on the floor. "On one condition."

"Oh, thank God!" cries his wife, with clasped hands. "There is no condition we would not fulfil to save our son."

"The safety of the person you allude to, but whom I will never again acknowledge as my son," says the old man, looking up with a fierce light in his blue eyes, "does not depend on you, Jane, nor on me; but upon her!" and his trembling hand is outstretched towards his daughter.

"Upon her!" repeats the mother, looking aghast. Then, sinking her voice to a whisper, adds, "She knows nothing of it, Graham, nothing of what has happened. You bade me be silent, and I have told her nothing!"

"She must hear it now," says the old man, in a broken voice, "and it is best that it should come from me. The honour of the family is given into her hands to do with as she likes—it could not be more safely bestowed. Margaret, my child!" turning to her, and laying his hand lightly

on her head; "a blow has fallen on us all which we shall never recover from, which will haunt us in our secret hours and be ever present with us, driving us to distraction with the fear of its discovery—but from the public shame of which you can absolve us, if you will."

"Do you doubt my will, if I have the power, father?" cries the girl, half indignantly. "Do you doubt that if by any sacrifice of mine, you and my mother could be spared an instant of uneasiness, I would not go through with it? You have but to name what I have to do—and it is done!"

"You speak bravely, Margaret, but you do not know the extent of the sacrifice you are called upon to make. Would to God that the power of rectification had rested with me alone, but that was not to be. Listen, Margaret! This morning, on my arrival at the office, I received a letter stating that a forgery, by which Messrs. Haddon's bank had been considerable losers, had, late last night, been traced to your brother Mark."

"Good heavens! a forgery! to Mark!"

"The proofs were such as not to admit of the slightest doubt! But the letter was marked 'Confidential,' and in it I was requested to call this morning at the bank and see Mr. Haddon."

"Was Mark arrested—in custody, I mean?"

"No; up to this time he is unaware that his crime has been discovered. I went to the bank, and saw Mr. Haddon. To me personally he was very kind, and spoke in the most feeling manner of his sorrow for the effects of the blow on your mother and on you. But as regards Mark, he spoke with the strongest determination. He had been well treated, he said, and had deliberately betrayed his trust. If the partners were to forgive him, or even to condone his offence, they would themselves be compromising a felony, and acting discreditably towards the whole commercial world. It was a hard case for the family, but the law must take its course."

"Oh, father! the shame, the misery, the overwhelming degradation! After all our strivings, we shall never hold up our heads again!"

"Do you imagine that I do not feel it acutely, Margaret? I implored Mr. Haddon to give me time, and I would repay all the defalcations, though to do so would take the savings of my life, and leave you and your mother destitute,

should illness or death overtake me. He would not hear of it. 'Let the young man's crime fall upon himself,' he said; 'it is not fitting that the innocent should suffer for the guilty, that those two ladies should be impoverished for the sake of a criminal who well deserves all that is in store for him!' Then I pointed out Mark's position at home, how you and his mother worshipped him beyond anything on earth, and I sued for mercy for your sakes."

"That was right, father! What did Mr. Haddon say to that?"

"He was silent for a few moments. Then he said, 'You mention your daughter, Mr. Spencer; is her attachment to her brother very great?'"

"So great," I replied, "that I think the news I have to bring her is likely enough to cause her death." He hesitated again, then said, 'We are both of us men of business rather than of sentiment, Mr. Spencer, but we each of us have a tender spot about us; and however much you may cherish your daughter, you cannot be fonder of her than I am of my son. I love that boy Frederick as the apple of my eye, and my whole existence is bound up in him. For weeks past he has been visibly ailing; he has lost all interest in those pleasures and pastimes in which young men usually take delight, and sits apart, moping and dejected. The doctors have seen him, and can find no cause for the change, can assign no reason for the dejection. But a parent's eyes are keener than a physician's, Mr. Spencer; and the diagnosis which I have made of Frederick's malady is clear and correct. He loves your daughter, Spencer—loves her still; and her rejection of him is costing him his life.'"

"Father!" cries Margaret, with a sudden intuition, springing forward and casting herself on her knees at her father's feet; "father, spare me! oh, spare me!"

"Listen, Margaret," says Mr. Spencer, raising her tenderly in his arms. "Hear all before you speak. I will detain you but a little longer. After speaking further of his son's affection for you, and of the effect which, blighted and misapplied as he knew it to be, it was having on his health, Mr. Haddon said, 'Now, Spencer, I will give you one chance, and you shall save your own son in saving mine. Let Miss Spencer consent to marry Frederick, and not merely shall Mark's crime never

be made known, but I will see that a place is found for him in the house of our correspondent at Sydney. If you refuse, the law must take its course."

He looks at her, expectant of some reply, but she answers nothing. Hangs there, mute and immobile, round his neck. Only the tears stealing down his coat testify that she is alive.

"I did the best for you, my child," he says, looking down upon her, and his own eyes filling as he speaks. "I told him that you had refused Frederick Haddon by your own free will, without any pressure being put on you either by your mother or myself, and that I feared you could never love him. He said he did not ask that you should love, but that you should marry his son. 'I am old enough to know,' he said, 'that the supposed love which burned so brightly was soonest to dim, and that the esteem which grew up between a husband and wife was more reliable, and served its purpose better.' He told me all that, my dear!"

"Father!" murmurs Margaret, hiding her head on his shoulder—"James!"

"James!" repeats the old gentleman, doubtfully—"oh yes, of course! James Leagrave! yes, I mentioned him and said I thought there was some sort of engagement between you!"

"Some sort of engagement, father?"

"I thought it better to put it in that way, my dear. Mr. Haddon was very firm upon that point. He would not listen to any thing of the sort; he said, 'If Miss Spencer refuses her consent, the law must take its course.' That was the utmost I could get him to say. Margaret, I told you our rescue from infamy lay in your hands. You can now calculate whether you are disposed to pay the price at which it is fixed."

She says nothing, but sits with her head pillowed on her father's knees, her long hair, which has become loosened, hanging round her hidden face. Mrs. Spencer, who has been silently weeping the while, leaves her chair and takes up her position near her daughter, fondly stroking the girl's head, and looking enquiringly at her husband, from whom, however, she receives no intelligible sign. At length, Margaret raises her head, not high enough, indeed, for him to distinguish her face, and says, in a low dull voice, "I cannot—I will not do it!"

"It is for you to decide, my dear," says Mr. Spencer, shrugging his shoulders,

"and to weigh well the extent of the sacrifice."

"Do not imagine for an instant that that weighs with me! Such poor sacrifice of my life as I could make, I would make willingly, to save Mark from degradation, to save a pang to you and mother. But think of him, father! think of James, whose whole life is bound up in mine, who has toiled so long and so hard, with my love as his sole sustaining aid, my hand as his sole hope of reward! You know his devotion to me; but you don't know, no one can ever know, except myself, his manly honour, his bright steadfastness of purpose, the labour he has undertaken, the privations he has undergone, with this one beacon in view, ever cheering him on to the accomplishment of his task. Am I, by one act, to steep such a man in trouble to the lips, to plunge him into darkness, to leave him in the miry ways of life without any hope of extrication, to bring a curse upon his honest well-spent youth, and hold myself up, a thoughtless, feckless girl, who, for mere flirtation's sake, made myself the light and bane of his existence. No! not for ten thousand brothers would I do it!"

Her head is erect now, her face aglow with honest pride in her lover, and determination that his cause shall not suffer. Hush! the mother speaks now.

"You say you are not pleading for yourself, Margaret!" she says, in a weak and broken voice; "and neither your father nor I have any difficulty in believing that, for a better or more selfless girl never breathed. You are pleading for James Leagrave, your betrothed, a young man whom to know is to honour and respect. But you are just and honourable, Margaret, as well as good and selfless, and you will follow faithfully the contrast which I am going to show you. Suppose you do what is asked of you? You take away the taint from off your own and only brother's life, that life which has just commenced and promised so fairly, and enable him to make a fresh start in that world where without your aid, he must never again hope to find a friend in an honest man or woman. To such poor remainder of life as may be left to your father and myself—for at our age, deprived of both our children, and crushed and humbled in spirit, our tenure is not likely to be long—you give peace, such peace as is to be found here below. You refuse to do this, and to-morrow sees your brother a felon,

the dweller in a gaol, branded with the prison curse, a leper, a pariah, an outcast from all that is decent and honourable till his latest day; sees the good name for which your father has toiled for forty years swept away at once, leaves us heart-broken and alone, the object of scorn, or, still worse, of pity, to drag out our few remaining days in obloquy and neglect. And now for James Leagrave. I have not forgotten him. You marry him, we will say. Do you think that marriage will be a happy one? Oh, he will be to you all that a husband should be. I do not doubt that for an instant, he is far too honourable a man to act otherwise. But do you think you will be happy? Do you not imagine that from time to time there will come across you a vision of your brother in his misery and degradation, surrounded by the herd of villains to whose companionship he is henceforth relegated, and that your heart will tell you that but for you he might have had the chance of condoning his guilt, and re-establishing his position? When your father or I sink beneath the burden of our disgrace, as sink we speedily must, will not the thought strike you that we might have been kept alive, and our last days need not have been thus embittered but for you? James Leagrave loves you well, you say, and I do not doubt it; he need love you well, indeed, to be able to close his ears against the whispers and his mind against the knowledge that he, so upright and so just, has a brother-in-law who is a convicted felon, and whose reflected dishonour tarnishes his own fair fame."

Margaret's head moves under the caressing hand. "Mother!" she murmurs, but her voice fails her, and again she is silent.

"Now, my child," continues Mrs. Spencer in firmer tones, for her strength increases with courage and with hope; "now, my child, let us look at the other side. Suppose you consent to do as you are asked, and to save your brother. You break your word to James Leagrave. You find some pretext—for he must never know the truth—for releasing yourself from the contract. You cut him adrift. You think his great loving heart will break, that his life will be blighted, that he will never again know human happiness. Oh, Margaret, believe me, an old woman, speaking out of the plenitude of her experience. Men's hearts, the best and

kindest of them, do not break for love, my child. That it will be a blow to him, a stab which may leave a visible scar for years, I do not pretend to deny. But your rejection of his love will not be to him what your acceptance of it would be to us. He is young and we are old; and there is no shame accruing to him. The mocking laughter of the world at his failure would have no influence on such a man as James, and the very consciousness that he was in the right, and had been hardly done by, would help to heal the wound. I can say no more, Margaret. I have placed the matter before you according to my light. It is for you to decide upon it."

No sound for a few moments, then the girl moves, writhing as though in great anguish, her face hidden on her father's knees. "Oh, if I could only die myself!" she says, and the father is about to speak, but Mrs. Spencer raises her hand and moves her head quietly as who should say, "Let her make her plaint, poor child! let her sorrow have full vent! she is more likely to yield if this be done!"

And she does yield. Slowly and sadly she raises her face, flushed and tear-blurred, pushes aside the tangled masses of her hair, and looks half-vacantly round her. Then she shivers, and covers her eyes with her trembling hands. The contact reminds her evidently of the presence of the opal ring, for she slides it gently from her finger, and covers it with passionate kisses. "Go back to my darling who gave you to me," she murmurs, proudly regarding it; "go back to him, and if there be any power in you, as I have heard, tell him, what he must never hear from me, that never since we first met have I loved him as I love him now, never has my heart yearned for sympathy and communion with his as it does at this instant, and that, come to me what may, I in my secret heart shall cherish him, a thing apart from all else, to be worshipped and to be mourned!" She breaks down afresh with this, writhing on the floor, her head resting on her breast, her whole frame convulsed with sobbing and the ring in her lap between her rigid hands.

Mr. Spencer is the first to speak. "You have done bravely, Margaret," he commences, laying his hand upon her head, but the girl shrinks beneath his touch, and her mother motions him to retire.

"You have saved what is more to me

than Mark's life, his honour, Margaret," she says.

"And lost my own!" interrupts her daughter. "Mother, I have decided according to your wish; what now remains to do, let it be done quickly, for God's sake, and then take me away, far away from every one; let me have some weeks in calm and rest with you alone, or I shall go mad!" There is a fierce light in her eyes, and an air of desperation about her, quite foreign to her gentle nature.

"You must write a letter, Margaret—I—I promised Mr. Haddon that should be done to-day," says Mr. Spencer reluctantly.

"What?" cries Margaret, "I write to Frederick Haddon to invite him to his conquest? I—"

"No, no! I will do that. Mr. Haddon will hear from me; I will go to him this afternoon. But I must tell him you have written to—to the other—to James Leagrave."

One short sharp shudder passes through her, then with a mighty effort she recovers herself, rising to her feet, and throwing her hair back over her shoulders. "I will do it at once," she says.

There is a table in the corner of the room with writing materials on it. At this she seats herself, pulls the paper to her, and writes rapidly, never pausing to think, though the pen trails sometimes, and once a tear falls, which she quickly wipes away. These are the words I see:

"I return you the ring, and with it the troth which you plighted when you placed it on my finger. I claim mine from you, but if you do not surrender it, as is possible, it will not matter, as I shall never see you again. I have done you an inexpressible wrong, which I cannot soften or explain away. You will learn to hate me, and I pray that you may do so quickly. But lest you may ascribe this letter to the effects of jealousy or pique, or some transient passion, about which you could reason with me and overcome, I think it best to tell you, not merely that all between us is at an end for ever, but that I am shortly to be married to Mr. Frederick Haddon.

MARGARET SPENCER."

As she ceases writing she takes the ring, presses it once more fondly to her lips, then enwraps it in the letter, which she seals and directs to "James Leagrave, Esq." She is calm now, and her hand trembles no more, though her face is deadly white, and she can scarcely speak for lack of moisture in her mouth. But

as she hands the packet to Mr. Spencer, she says, "Your bidding is done, father! Mark is rescued, and I am sacrificed. That is what was wanted, I believe."

After a pause, during which nothing was heard but the restless scratching of George Haddon's pen, the professor took the opportunity of renewing his passes; and Miss Cornthwaite, the tension of whose limbs had decreased, and whose voice had gradually grown weaker, proceeded:—

I follow the messenger bearing the letter in which the ring is enclosed until he stops at the door of a large old-fashioned house, in a dull street in Soho. There a slipshod slatternly servant-maid takes it from him, and carries it up the broad staircase, to a room on the second floor, where she deposits it on the table. A dark room with heavy oaken furniture, large presses filled with big books in leather bindings, a worn Turkey carpet, a small camp-bed, and the table littered with papers. Only one thing significant of youth among all the surroundings, a pencil drawing of Margaret Spencer, in a gold frame, hanging over the mantelpiece.

As the dusk closes in, the door opens, and a man appears on the threshold. The same man who was with the girl in Kensington-gardens, in the early morning. His step as he enters the room is slow, his face pale, his whole aspect tired and worn. He advances towards the table, and when he sees the letter lying there, and recognises the handwriting, his eyes brighten and he smiles in delight. He takes it in his hand and, feeling the enclosure, starts at first but smiles again. It is a present from her, he thinks. He goes out to get a light, and returns with it, the letter still in his hand. He seats himself at the table and breaks the seal. The opal ring falls out; it is enveloped in paper, and he does not at first realise what it is. When he does he turns pale again, and his lips and hands tremble. He opens the letter, and, holding it to the candle, reads it quickly through. Then the paper flutters from his hand to the ground, and with a groan he throws his arms on the table, and hides his head between them.

When he looks up five minutes afterwards, his lips are set, and the rest of his features tolerably composed. "So," he mutters, "that hope perishes with the rest."

It has taken me many years and much labour to fill my cup, and now, just when I was about to raise it to my lips, it is dashed down! There is a fatality in it all, and it was meant, I suppose, that mine should be a celibate and a lonely life, and that what might have been my heart shall be dried up within me. But," he cries with a sudden access of wrath, "Curses be upon those who have reduced me to this! My curse upon you, Margaret Spencer, for your vanity, your waywardness, your wretched worship of wealth, which has led you to mate with a rich man whom you cannot love, and to stab me, who so fondly cherished you, to the heart! My curse upon you and yours to the last generation! May you know the pangs which I have suffered, the misery which is upon me now!"

As he speaks he opens a leather dispatch box standing on the table, and throwing "it" into it, locks it from his sight.

Miss Cornthwaite's voice was very low and indistinct, so much so that George had had difficulty, notwithstanding, or, perhaps, owing to his extreme excitement, in catching what she said. The professor was attentive to this, and as she ceased speaking, he rose hastily.

"I must stop the séance," he said, crossing to George, "she must be roused, it would be dangerous to keep her entranced any longer. I am sorry, for your sake, Mr. Haddon, though I almost hope you may have heard enough."

"Enough!" cried George, putting his note-book into his pocket; "enough, I firmly believe, to ensure my future happiness! How shall I ever thank you for your kindness?"

"By going off at once—a patient generally objects to being aroused in the presence of strangers—and by letting me know whether your 'evening with a clairvoyante' has really effected the good you anticipate!"

"You may depend on my doing so!" said George, shaking the professor's hand, as he emerged into the street. "And now for Portland Place. It is not yet eleven o'clock, and I want to see the madre before I sleep to-night!"

THE BREAKING OF THE SPELL.

In a handsomely-furnished room of one of the best hotels at Brighton, on a brilliant November morning, when all the gay world

is riding, driving, or promenading in the King's Road, while the music of the band on the pier comes wafted in through the open window, a man is sitting alone in an arm-chair, drawn before the fire. James Legrave, for it is he, hears not the band, nor does he take any notice of the pedestrian and equestrian crowd filing perpetually past his window. Occasionally he glances at a pile of manuscript on a table by his side, then he carries his eyes back to the fire, glaring at the cavernous depths of the glowing coals, as though in them he could trace those scenes of his bygone life, the memory of which the perusal of the manuscript sheets had just aroused within him.

"And so," he says to himself, slowly shaking his head the while, "during the whole of my life I have been labouring under one gigantic error, and for thirty years have done one of the only two women I ever cared for the grossest injustice! When Margaret sold herself to save her brother she never loved me better, and her last act was to kiss the opal ring before sending it back to me! Ah, if I had only had then the clairvoyante's power: if I could only have seen her do that, what consolation it would have brought to my lonely life! I should have been lonely all the same, but I should have known the difficulty to which she had yielded, and I should have pitied instead of cursing her! I wonder now, I have sometimes wondered in the past, that I did not make a desperate attempt then to discover whether the action which went so near to breaking my heart, the action which chilled it to the core, was her own doing. Had I but silenced pride, put down anger, and thought of her as I knew her to be, rather than taken her own word for her own baseness, Margaret might still have been mine! And yet what could I have done? Money, if I had even possessed it at the time, would have failed to buy off Haddon. Strange that the son of a man who was capable of making such a bargain, of accepting such a sacrifice, should be a fine fellow, as Minnie's lover evidently is, so steady, and brave, and constant—"

"A gentleman to see you, sir," interrupted a waiter, handing a card.

"Show him in," said Mr. Legrave, glancing at it. "Now for such amends as I can make. I expected you, Mr. Haddon," he continued, advancing to meet our friend George, "and am very glad to see you.

Sit you down, Mr. Haddon; I am a man of business, and accustomed to come straight to the point. I have read the papers which you sent to me, and which, as I understand, contain the history you took down from the lips of a clairvoyante. So far as I can judge, that history is exactly correct; to the portion of it which relates to my own days I can swear, even after such a lapse of time, and I am, therefore, bound to believe the rest. While reading them I have been profoundly affected, and, I am not ashamed to add, moved to many tears, and I have grown from their perusal a wiser, and, I hope, a better man. Blindness has fallen from my eyes, and the only woman whom in my long life I ever regarded with a lover's worship—your mother, Mr. Haddon—stands again in my idea as she did thirty years ago, an angel!"

Mr. Legrave paused here, and made a great gulp at something in his throat. Then he said,

"However, I shall have time and opportunity, I hope, to explain that to her! You sent me those papers with an object; to induce me to withdraw my opposition to your marriage with my niece. So far as I am concerned that object is attained; as for Minnie you will

find her in the next room, and you can learn her answer from her own lips."

Two hours afterwards, George and Minnie were standing at the head of the pier. The band had gone, and all the fashionable frequenters had retired to luncheon. Here and there some children were playing about, but the lovers were completely isolated.

George was the first to speak. "Minnie, darling," said he, "I brought you here for a purpose."

"Did you, George?" said she, looking up at him intently. Her face was provokingly near to his, and not even the children were looking.

"I did not mean that," he said, after it was over, "but this. You shall go with me to Hancock's when we go back to town, and choose your own engaged ring, but you shall never wear the opal again. It has worked enough misery in its time, and was very nearly bringing us to grief. I will take care that it never has another chance."

As he spoke he took the opal ring from his pocket, and flung it from his extended hand. One flash of lurid light it emitted as it fell, then sank beneath the waves, to remain there till the end of time.

END OF THE CHRISTMAS NUMBER FOR 1874.

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